

EIGHT

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SERMONS

ON A

Future General Judgment.

By THOMAS AMORY.



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EIGHT

PERMITS

ON A

General Instruction

BY THE BOARD OF

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THE
DEDICATION.



O the CONGREGATION
who statedly attend on
my Ministry, especially
to those by whose encou-
ragement, and at whose Request,
the following Discourses are pub-
lished, they are now dedicated ; as
a grateful acknowledgment of their
distinguishing regard and friendship,

The Dedication.

and a lasting proof of my affectionate concern, that they may be finally approved of God, and happy for ever.

Tho. Amory.



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THE
PREFACE.



*HERE are no Truths more
confessedly important, than
those which relate to a Future
General Judgment, none in
themselves better fitted strongly
to impress the heart of man, and none the
firm*

The P R E F A C E.

firm belief and serious consideration of which would have a better influence on our present temper and conduct, and on our final everlasting happiness. This must be my Apology, for offering to the Publick Discourses on a Subject, so often, and so well treated, and on which little new can be expected.

The Understandings and the Tastes of men are very different; for this reason different representations of the same Truths may be very useful. If therefore in the following Sermons, these important Truths are represented in a manner peculiarly adapted to convince and affect some minds, (which from the impression they made when preached, the Author has some room to hope they may) all who by the serious perusal of them, shall be excited and determined to act more like accountable and immortal Beings, and who thus become more acceptable to God now, and more happy for ever, will be the Author's Apology for complying with the earnest Desire of his Hearers in the
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The P R E F A C E.

Publication. And that all who read them may receive this advantage, is the earnest Prayer of the Author, to the God of all Grace and Mercy, who would have all men to be saved.



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ST. R.



S E R M O N I.

Of the great events which will introduce the final Judgment, and of our Lord's glorious coming to judge the world.

M A T T. XXV. 31, 32.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.

TH E S E words direct our thoughts to the concluding scene of our world, the resurrection of all mankind, and their final judgment at the tribunal of the Son of God; a subject the most solemn, august, and interesting of any, in the whole compass of truths natural
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and revealed. For surely if any part of our duration demands our serious regard, it must be this, wherein we shall see the *Son of Man*, who is also the *Son of God*, descending from heaven ^a in *his own visible glory*, with the *glory of his Father*, and of *all his holy angels*; when we shall hear the awful *trump* founded to call all mankind from their graves, and from this earth, to *meet the Lord in the air*, shall ourselves be roused by it, and summoned to join the innumerable company; and with them appear before an impartial and unerring Judge, to whom ^b *the secrets of all hearts* are open, who *will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing*, and rendering to all according to *their works*, distribute everlasting recompences. A period, wherein we must hear the dreadful groans and burst of expiring nature, and see those furious flames every where breaking out, that will put an end to the habitation of mankind, and to all their works on earth; and reduce this now beautiful and glorious scene to an horrid *fiery furnace*, which will be the prison and the portion of those, who have preferred this world to heaven; while the saints, who on their trial have preferred the satisfactions of truth, virtue, goodness, friendship, devotion, and the presence

^a Luke ix. 26. 1 Cor. xv. 52. 1 Thess. iv. 17.
^b 1 Cor. iv. 5. Heb. iv. 13. Eccles. xii. 14. Rom. ii. 6. — Rev. xx. 15.

presence of God, shall dwell in his presence,
and *be for ever with the Lord.* " God grant
" we may all so contemplate this awful, this
" certain, this approaching scene, that it
" may never more be absent from our seri-
" ous thoughts; and may so influence our
" future temper and conduct, as to ingage us
" with the utmost care to avoid whatever
" would expose us to the condemnation of
" this day; and with the most chearful con-
" stant diligence to practise whatever will pro-
" cure for us its honours! May not this repre-
" sentation of it serve to render any, through
" their continually neglecting to provide for
" it, more inexcusable and more wretched
" when it comes!"

As an introduction to this awful subject, I
shall from the Text discourse of the glorious
coming of the Lord Christ, at the end of the
world for the general Judgment. The words
are subjoined to the *Parable of the Talents*,
in which our Lord informs us, that as he
now gives to us in trust different abilities and
opportunities for doing good, he will come,
though after a long time, and call us to an
account, and reward or punish us according
as we have improved or abused our trust.
That his coming will be, for the manner of
it, most grand and awful, he assures us v. 31.
When the Son of Man shall come in his glory,
and all the holy angels with him, then shall he
sit on the throne of his glory. The time ap-

pointed for this great event, we learn from the connection of the words with the preceding, it will be when the *unprofitable servant is cast into outer darkness*, that is, at the season of the general Judgment, with which the period of our material world is closely united, as St. Peter informs us in his Second Epistle, iii. 10. The following Proposition therefore is clearly warranted by the Text.

The Son of Man shall appear at the end of the world, in a most solemn and glorious manner, in order to his judging all mankind.

In discoursing on this Proposition, I would,

- I. Describe and prove this *glorious appearance* of the *Son of Man*, at the end of the world, in order to his judging the whole human race. And,
- II. Shew you the *wisdom* of God in this dispensation, and its *practical* uses.

I. I am to describe and prove this *glorious appearance* of the *Son of Man*, at the end of the world, in order to the *general Judgment*. The description and proof of this will be the same, for I shall set before you the account given of it by our Lord and his Apostles, our only certain informers in this great affair; who proved by numberless great and undeniable miracles their being commissioned by God,

God, to reveal these great and interesting events to us; events which it is manifestly worthy the wisdom, justice, and goodness of the great governor of the world to ordain. The description and proof will be comprized under the following heads.

1. The *forerunners* of our Lord's coming to Judgment will be most *tremendous*, proper to strike the minds of men with the deepest awe, and to introduce the last Judgment and the end of the world. For, besides the great changes in the *moral* world, which according to the ^c Prophets and Apostles will precede this great event, such as the general *conversion* of the *Jews*, and the *coming in* of the *fulnefs* of the *Gentiles*, a more abundant effusion of the holy Spirit, and a general prevalence of piety, truth and righteousness through the earth; which being in themselves so great and wonderful, will raise the attention of mankind, and being foretold, will lead the thoughts of all the honest and considerate forward to the grand concluding transactions foretold by the same inspired persons; besides these changes in the *moral* world, there will be also very great alterations in the *natural* world introductory to the coming of

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the

^c Isai. xii, xlv, liv, lvi, lix, &c. Dan. ii. 35, 45. Joel ii. 28. Rom. xi. 12. — Revel. xviii. 19, 20. See also *Whitby's* Appendix to Rom. xi.

the Son of God to Judgment. ^d St. Luke thus describes the coming of the Son of Man, after mentioning Jerusalem's being destroyed, and trodden down by the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. And there shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; mens hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming upon the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with power and great glory. I own what follows in St. Luke's gospel, and the description in St. Matthew, xxiv. 29, parallel to this, immediately after the tribulation of these days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, &c. primarily refer to the coming of Christ to destroy Jerusalem, and were dreadfully fulfilled in those prodigies which ushered in that destruction, in the utter ruin of the government and people, which are sometimes described by the ^e Prophets in the figurative expressions of the sun and moon being darkened, and the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof not giving their light, &c. and in those tremendous earthquakes, which according to the cotemporary Jewish Histo-

^d Luke xxi. 25. —

^e Isai. xlii. 9. xxxiv. 3, 4

Historian * *Josephus*, and the *beaten Historians*, accompanied and followed the ruin of the *Jewish* polity. But then I think 'twill be as evident, to any one who compares the whole description given by Christ here with the other scriptures, which confessedly relate to his final coming to judge the world, that our Lord designed, in his representation of his coming to judge and punish the *Jewish* nation, to typify and represent his coming to judge the whole world. Compare particularly his words, *Matt. xxiv. 30. Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth or of the land, mourn: and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory:* with the account of his ascending into heaven on a cloud, *Acts i. 9, &c.* and the assurance given by the angels to his disciples, that this *same Jesus* who was taken up from them on a cloud into heaven, should so come in *like manner* as they had seen him go into heaven; and with the prophetic declaration of *St. John, Revel. i. 7. Behold, he cometh with clouds and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.* *St. John* uses almost the same words with our Saviour in the passage cited from *St.*

A 4

Matthew.

* *Jos. de B. Jud. L. iv. c. 17. Dion. Cass. Hist. L. lxvi. lxxviii.*

Matthew. Compare also our Lord's words, *Matt. xxiv. 31, And he shall send his angels, or messengers, with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other:* which words are justly interpreted of the gospel's being preached by the Apostles, the messengers of Christ, throughout the whole *Roman* empire, and numerous converts every where gathered into the Christian Church, before the destruction of *Jerusalem*. Compare these words with the prediction given by our Lord, *Matt. xiii. 41, &c.* which it is confessed relates to the end of the world, and they will be found so like to each other, as to induce one to think our Lord had both events in his eye, when he pronounced the first cited, and designed to describe both events, and lead our thoughts to both. *The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend. So shall it be at the end of the world, the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just.* The resurrection of the just, and their being collected into one glorious body, is also represented to be effected at the sound of a trumpet. *At the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

Add

Add to this, that we shall be able more easily to vindicate those bold and lofty expressions in the *Prophets*, describing the ruin of a nation by the sun's being darkened, and the stars falling from heaven, &c. from the charge of being overstrained, by supposing, that besides the present ruin of a wicked nation, they were designed also to shadow out the final and general destruction of all the wicked at the end of the world, with the awful circumstances which would attend it. And what absurdity or difficulty is there in supposing, that the divine Spirit, from whom all these predictions proceeded, and to whose view the whole series of events lies open, should describe those lesser punishments and judgments of God upon wicked nations, which were proofs of his unalterable abhorrence of vice and impiety, and earnest of his judging the whole world, and punishing all the wicked, in figures and language that would only be verified, to the full, at the final Judgment, and might therefore naturally lead mens thoughts forward to this grand event. Thus * *Isaiab* represents the destruction of *Babylon*, by scenes grand and terrible, like those which will precede the last Judgment. *The day of the Lord cometh, the land shall be desolate; the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light. The sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall*

not

* *Isai. xiii. 9, 10.*

not cause her light to shine. In the same strain also is the prediction of the punishments of the Jewish nation, delivered by the Prophet ^h Joel, and cited by St. Peter. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.

Add to all this, that these signs in heaven must necessarily go before the burning of the world, if, which is most highly probable, the subterraneous fires which now frequently break out will be employed to effect it; and those fires be greater, and their eruptions more frequent, towards the end of the world, than before *. If you read the accounts of any great eruptions or earthquakes, you will find almost all the appearances mentioned by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, produced by the fires underground. *The sun's being turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, and the stars failing to give their light*, are the natural effects of the air being filled with sulphureous vapours, forced through the pores of the earth in great quantities by those subterraneous fires, before their grand eruption; which of course darken the light of the sun, and cause the moon to appear as blood, overspread with a dull redness, and quite hide the stars. The appearance

^h Joel ii. 30, 31. Acts ii. 16. —
 los. Transact. abridged. Vol. II. p. 400, &c.

* See Phi-

ance of the *stars falling from heaven* is caused by the taking fire of those sulphureous vapours with which the air is charged, and which when fired, appear like falling stars; and which, as the air is stored with them in an extraordinary degree, must take fire more frequently and terribly than usual. And in the account of the last great earthquake and eruption in *Sicily*, you have all these particulars mentioned as preceding it. And as for the other sign, *the sea and waves roaring* in an unusual manner, this is caused by those fires working under the ocean, and making it heave and boil in a dreadful manner, without the violence of stormy winds. For the roaring of the waves, when tossed by a storm, is an effect so common, as to have little in it terrible to mankind. Whereas the universal *distress of nations*, and *men's hearts failing them*, we all know are the natural consequences of earthquakes, when they grow frequent, and are violent and extensive. Who that has read the account of a great earthquake and fiery eruption, and revives the idea, but must shudder at the thought, and readily apprehend how dreadful the consternation will every where be, which shall usher in the coming of our Lord, fully justifying the propriety of those grand and astonishing descriptions, and proving that they ultimately refer to the coming of the Son of Man for the last Judgment, and
will

will be then accomplished, and beyond our present imagination exceeded. It is evident therefore that the coming of our Lord to judge the world will be most tremendous, for grandeur and solemnity suited to the majesty of the judge, and the design of his coming, when it shall be introduced by the sun's being darkened, and the moon turned into blood, and the stars appearing to fall from heaven, the sea and it's waves roaring, and the earth every where trembling, groaning, and pouring out floods of fire; the rage of which, nothing but almighty power can restrain, from burning the world before its destined period.

2. After these *alarms* given to the world to expect and prepare for his coming, the *Son of Man*, who is also the *Son of God*, shall descend from heaven in ⁱ *his own glory*, in the *glory of his Father*, and of all his holy angels, and with ten thousands of his saints. How grand, how awful, how amazing will be the scene, when the skies shall open, and a glory pour forth, the streams of which shall reach our world, and compared to which the light and glory of the sun shall appear as darkness! With what eager curiosity will men at first turn their eyes towards it, and with what terror and confusion will the wicked, overborn by it, hide their faces in the dust! How can guilty mortals stand his

ⁱ Luke ix. 26. Jude 14. 1 Theff. iii. 13.

coming, before ^k *whose face the earth and the seas shall flee away?* For our Lord, clothed with his glorified body, shall rise from his throne, where he sits at the right hand of God, clouds shall form his chariot on which he rides, borne by the mightiest angels, while thousands of thousands of those radiant spirits shall march through the gates of heaven before him, and ten thousand times ten thousand attend his progress, to assert his universal dominion, and judge all mankind.

If we fix our thoughts awhile on the words cited from St. *Luke*, we may form exalted and affecting apprehensions of the majesty and splendor of his appearance. He shall *come in his own glory*. The Lord Christ, who, though *the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person*, yet for the salvation of mankind *humiliated himself*, partook of *flesh and blood*, became subject to hunger, thirst and weariness; submitted to be persecuted, reproached, scourged, spit upon, imprisoned, crowned with thorns, and nailed to a cross; he shall appear in his own glory, as the *only begotten* of the Father, his well *beloved Son*, and the *heir of all things*. ¹ *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth, who have not obeyed the truth, but obeyed unrighteousness, shall wail because of him.* We may be aided to apprehend in
some

^k Rev. xx. 11.

¹ Rev. i. 7. Rom. ii. 8.

some measure how dazling this glory will be, by considering that it is the glory of the *only begotten* of the Father; and by reflecting on the accounts given us in Scripture, of the splendor of some of his appearances to his Apostles. When in his ^m *transfiguration* on the mount he gave three of his disciples a glimpse of his majesty, *his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light*. When he appeared to ⁿ *Saul* to check his persecution of his followers, and to convert him, his voice was as *thunder*, a great light shone round about *Saul*, and his company above the light of the sun, dazled, blinded, and overpowered him; and those awful words, *Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me*, smote him to the earth. And if his appearance for the humbling and converting a single sinner was thus glorious, how august will his coming be to deliver all his saints, and punish all his enemies? When after his ascension to heaven he appeared to St. ^o *John*, *his head and his hairs were white like wooll, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire, and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and his voice as the sound of many waters, and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength*. You see the most radiant things in nature are united to represent the splendor of his appearance, which was so strong, as to strike

^m Matt. xv. 2.

ⁿ Acts ix. 3. — xxvi. 13.

^o Rev. i. 14.

strike the Apostle who beheld it to the ground as dead. And if he thus appeared on a private and less important occasion, to make some revelations to his beloved disciple, how magnificent, beyond all our imaginations, must we conclude his coming will be, when he shall be seen in *all his glory*, and on the most solemn occasion, to exercise the greatest and most important acts of his government, the rewarding or punishing the world of mankind; ^p *when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe; and in flaming fire to take vengeance on them who know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.*

We are to remember also, that our Lord will not only appear in his *own glory*, but in *the glory of his Father*. As he is to judge the world by the authority of his Father, ^q *who hath committed all judgment unto him; that* ^r *light inaccessible and full of glory* which the supream majesty of heaven and earth inhabits, and from which he delivers his orders to attending angels, this shall dignify his Son when he descends to Judgment. Reason will assure us this must be inconceivably awful and majestic, on account of the infinite greatness and perfection of the
God

^p 2 Theff. i. 8. ^q John v. 22. ^r 1 Tim. vi. 16.

God whose glory it is; the God, at whose rebuke the ^t sun is darkened, and the pillars of heaven tremble, and who sealetb up the stars. Who when he manifested himself in a lower degree at mount ^t Sinai to give his laws to *Israel*, yet such was his majesty, that the mountains melted and fled from his presence, thunderings and lightnings proclaimed his descent, mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, and shook greatly, and all the camp of Israel trembled and cried, let Moses speak, and we will bear, but let not God speak with us lest we die.

And to fill up the solemnity of his appearance, our Lord shall come, not only in his own glory, and in the glory of his Father, but of all his holy angels. These, when they have appeared singly to deliver some message from heaven, have ^u dazled the beholder, and overborn his senses. What dazling, what over-powering glory must then flow from millions of them, drest in their utmost splendor, to attend and introduce the Son of God to our world; who ^w shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ! Finally, to compleat the glory of his appearance, his redeemed, the spirits of just men made perfect, all the saints who have re-
fided

^t Job ix. 7. xxvi. 11. ^t Exod. xix. 18. xx 19.
^u Dan. x. 5. ^w 2 Thess. i. 7.

sided with him ^{*} in *Paradise*, shall descend with him to Judgment, (conspicuous in those fine vehicles with which their souls are thought to be clothed, while absent from their bodies, See 2 Cor. v. 1, 2.) to resume their bodies, and receive their full reward of glory and happiness. That they shall come with Christ, seems plain from their now ^a *residing with him*, from the before cited words of St. Jude, and from the encouragement St. ^b Paul gives the *Thessalonians*, that they should be *established unblameable in holiness, before God even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints; all his saints you see are to come with him; and that them who sleep in Jesus God will bring with him.*

Let us consider further that this grand appearance will not only dazzle the eye, and through that strike the mind of the beholder, but they shall ^c *descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God* Thunderings and lightnings ushered in the appearance of God to give laws to *Israel*; what awful thunderings think you will then proclaim the coming of his Son to judge in his name the whole world, and determine the eternal states of all? What loud thunders of acclamations will then rend the vault of heaven from millions of angels and saints! How will the an-

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gels

^{*} Luke xxiii. 43.

^a 2 Cor. v. 8.

Philip.

^b 1 Thess. iii. 13. iv. 14.

^c 1 Thess. iv. 16.

gels triumph in the full glories of their beloved Sovereign, in the utter subversion of the empire of sin and of death, and in the destruction of the devil, his angels and servants! And how will holy souls exult, what acclamations of joy will they raise, when they behold their beloved Redeemer in the height of majesty and universal dominion, are witnesses to his compleat triumph over sin, and death, and hell, and are about to receive from him the full reward of bliss and immortality^d! How great, how

^d *Milton's* description of the triumphal procession of the Son of God is so noble, and so agreeable with the Scripture account of his coming to Judgment, that I cannot help giving it a place in the margin.

— Forth rush'd with whirlwind sound
The Chariot of Paternal Deity,
Flashing thick flames, wheel within wheel undrawn,
Itself instinct with spirit, but convoy'd
By four cherubic shapes; four faces each
Had wondrous, as with stars; their bodies all
And wings were set with eyes; with eyes, the wheels
Of Beril, and careering fires between;
Over their heads a chrystal firmament,
Where on a saphir throne, inlaid with pure
Amber, and colours of the show'ry arch,
He onward came; far off his coming shon,
Attended with ten thousand thousand Saints;
And twenty thousand (I their number heard)
Chariots of God, half on each hand were seen:
He on the wings of Cherub rode sublime,
On the chrystallin skie, in Saphir thron'd,
Illustrious far and wide: but by his own
First seen, them unexpected joy surpriz'd,
When the great ensign of *Messiah* blaz'd.

Paradise Lost. B. vi. l. 750.

how surprizing, and how different, will be the effects of this coming of the Son of God, in setting forth which language and imagination fail, and of which every thing that is august or splendid in our world, when united, will make but a very faint picture. How will the saints, who shall then be living on earth, as the bright procession approaches, and the shouts of the Redeemer's train reach their ears more and more distinctly, lift up their heads with joy, and see their redemption drawing nigh! " See he comes! Our " Lord, our Saviour! He whom we have " loved and served, for whom we have " waited, faithful to him, and for his sake " enduring labours, reproaches, and persecutions, which will now be infinitely overpaid! Behold, he comes, and his reward is " with him! Look on him sinners, you who " late despised him, his authority and laws, " insulted and persecuted his servants, and " in scorn asked us, where is the promise of " his coming. — See it accomplished. Where " now is your pride, your vain boasts? " Your haughty looks are fallen, and your " pride buried in the dust. Our indignation against your vices, and our resentment of the ill treatment you gave us, are " now changed into pity. — How will you " behold his coming, how stand his appearance? Poor wretches!" Then princes shall cast themselves from their thrones to the
earth,

earth, and their palaces totter and fall. The prosperous, the insulting, the persecuting tyrants and oppressors, the late secure and presumptuous sinners, shall flee to *the dens and caves of the earth, and call upon the mountains and rocks to fall on them, and hide them from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb ; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?* Now a final period is put to all the pomp and vanity, to all the amusements, follies, and vices of mankind. The world can please, and charm, and delude, and they doat no longer. — They are now convinced, effectually convinced, but too late, that nothing deserved their concern in comparison of religion and virtue, which they neglected, though the only way of approving themselves to this great prince. They now see that all other pleasures were vain, but the pleasure arising from an obedience to his laws, and a sense of his favour ; and that all other honours, but the honour of his approbation, were empty breath, and not worth a thought or labour, Now the scorning unbelieving crew curse themselves for their insults on religion, and the gospel of a crucified Jesus ; all their boasted reasonings and pompous objections against the excellence and divine authority of his religion vanish, nor can they any longer cheat themselves. — But hark, the sound

found of his chariot grows louder and stronger. — He is come to our earth; a sacred awe overpowers even the good; they can no longer bear the tumultuous agitations of fear, and hope, and joy; nor the wicked their terrors, but all the living die, or rather [†] *are changed*, and by the resistless splendor of their Judge, and the awful sound of the last trump, are driven at once into their new state and manner of being. For,

3. The Son of God being arrived, shall seat himself on a *majestic throne*, the *trump of God* shall *sound* and *rouse* all the *dead*, who at the *command* of the *Judge* shall resume their bodies, and return to life; all the *living* shall be *changed*, and the whole human race be brought by the *angels* before the Judgment Seat of Christ. The *Judge's seating himself on his throne* is thus described by St. John, as it was shown to him in a vision. [‡] *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books according to their works.* In order to this exact judgment of all, the Judge being seated, the command for a *general resurrection* shall be published

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by

1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

‡ Rev. xx. 11, 12.

by the ^h voice of an archangel, and by the trump of God. The manner in which this grand order shall be pronounced, may be learnt from the solemnity, with which an archangel in the ⁱ *Revelations* denounces a great change about to take place in the church and in the world. *And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. And he had in his hand a little book open, and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth; and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. And he lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that therein are, and the earth and the things that therein are, and the sea and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer.* With such solemnity may we well believe the archangel will proclaim the period of our world, and a general resurrection; and then the Son of God, who is ^k *the resurrection and the life*, and to whom the Father hath committed all judgment, who, when on earth, said to ^l *Lazarus* dead and buried, *Lazarus come forth*, and was immediately obeyed; this same Jesus according to his

^b *1 Thess.* iv. 16. *1 Cor.* xv. 52.
x. 1.

^k *John* xi. 25.

^l *John* xi. 43

ⁱ *Rev.*

his promise shall command all the dead to return to life, and all the living to appear with them before his Judgment Seat, and shall be obeyed. He shall cause the trumpet of God to be sounded, and its invivifying voice shall penetrate the deepest caverns of the earth and seas, and spread all over the world; and being attended with an almighty energy, shall awaken the dead every where, and produce a general resurrection. ^m *The hour is coming, says the great Judge himself, in which all that are in their graves shall hear my voice, and shall come forth. They that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. The trumpet shall sound, saithⁿ St. Paul, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible; that is, all who die in the Lord, for the dead in Christ shall rise first: and Christ will change their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the energy whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself. Then shall their bodies, which were sown in corruption, be raised in incorruption; which were sown in dishonour, be raised in glory; which were sown in weakness, be raised in power; which were sown animal, be raised spiritual. For these corruptible must put on incorruption, and these mortal, immortality.* This advantageous change be-

B 4

longs

^m John v. 28.
iii, 21.

ⁿ I Cor. xv. 42.

Philip.

longs only to *the dead in Christ*, who will welcome the resurrection, and triumph in it. But the wicked, though most reluctant, will be forced to resume their bodies, and come before their Judge. Our Lord assures us in the place just cited, that *all who are in their graves must hear his voice, and come forth; and they who have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.* ° *They shall awake*, says Daniel, *to shame and everlasting contempt.* And the description of the last Judgment given by St. John includes the resurrection of all, of the wicked, and of the righteous. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.* What particular changes the power of God will make in the bodies of the wicked when he raises them, the Scriptures have not revealed to us; only this in general we may conclude, that they will be raised in a condition to endure, for so long a space as the wisdom and righteousness of God shall appoint,

° Daniel xii. 2.

appoint, the torments of that lake of fire; wherein ^p they shall be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power: ^q by him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. The dead being thus raised, all who shall be found alive by our Lord at his coming, will undergo such a change, as is necessary to qualify them to take their proper parts in the transactions of the great day, and in its important consequences. ^r Behold, says an inspired Apostle, I shew you a mystery, that is, something before a secret, but now made known, we shall not all sleep, not all of us true christians, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. This change is necessary to prepare the righteous for their reward; since flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption: their corruptible bodies therefore must put on incorruption, and their mortal, immortality. The bodies of the wicked, who shall be then alive, must also be greatly changed; that they may be able to go through the transactions of the last great day, and to receive their portion in the lake of fire.

The whole human race, who have ever lived and acted as moral agents on this globe throughout all their generations, being thus prepared

^p 2 Theff. i. 8, 9.
xv. 50.

^q Matt. x. 28.

^r 1 Cor.

prepared to take their trials, shall be brought together by the angels before the Judgment Seat, and then formed by them into two distinct bodies, *the righteous on the right hand of the Judge, and the wicked on his left.* Our Lord informs us this work will be performed by the angels, saying; *as the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be at the end of the world.* The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. And again, the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just. If it be asked where can a plain be found on this earth, large enough to contain this vast assembly, of all who have lived and acted upon it for so many thousand years, as shall pass from the beginning of the world to the conclusion of it? I answer, as the earth has no plain large enough to contain them, it is most probable they will all, by the power of God, be lifted up and supported in the air. That the righteous will, seems evident from those words of the Apostle, *that they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air;* and our Saviour you see informs us, that the
righteous

‡ Matt. xxv. 33.

‡ Matt. xiii. 40.

righteous and the wicked shall appear together.

You have now had a brief sketch of the account given of this great transaction in the divinely inspired Scripture, our only certain informer. It presents to our view all mankind, who have ever lived, or who shall ever live and act as moral agents, present before the tribunal of Christ; and what an immense, what an august appearance is here! The Judge, the only begotten of the Father, once incarnate, seated on his throne, invested with his own glory, and with the glory of his Father; all his holy angels surrounding him in all their splendor and beauty; — raised on his right hand the millions of millions of his saints, and righteous men shining in their glorified bodies; — and sunk on his left all the wicked, their countenances overspread with shame, confusion, and horror, and surrounded by the devil and his angels, trembling also and expecting their dreadful doom. How do all mortal greatness and splendor, the largest and most pompous scenes and spectacles shrink and disappear, when we have in fixed thought and clear prospect before us this grand assembly! Here the mightiest emperors are upon a level with their meanest subjects; and if they have acted an impious, tyrannical and wicked part, and the other a pious and virtuous one, are sunk distinguishingly below them. No
distinc-

distinctions of quality, birth, or rank; of fortune or wealth, of beauty, strength, wit, learning or penetration, avail here. All take place according to their *moral qualities*, their good or ill improvement of the talents and advantages they have possessed in life. Their glory is more distinguished, or their shame more notorious, in proportion as they have been righteous or wicked, pious or ungodly. This, my friends, will soon become all *awful reality*. As surely as we now live the creatures of a most wise and righteous God, reasonable, and free, and accountable; and as surely as God sent his Son to be our Lawgiver, and hath appointed him to be our Judge, ^u *of which he hath given assurance to all men by raising him from the dead*, so surely must all of us soon stand before this great tribunal, and every one of us bear a part, happy or wretched, in the awful transactions of this decisive day. Certainly then, nothing concerns us like this, that we spend our remaining life in such a manner, as we shall be able to answer with joy and humble confidence before the bar of Christ; steadily avoiding every indulgence and practice which will not bear the light of this day; and chearfully practising all those instances of piety, goodness, and charity, which will then be received with, ^w *well done good and faithful servant!*

^u Acts xvii. 31.

^w Matt. xxv. 21.

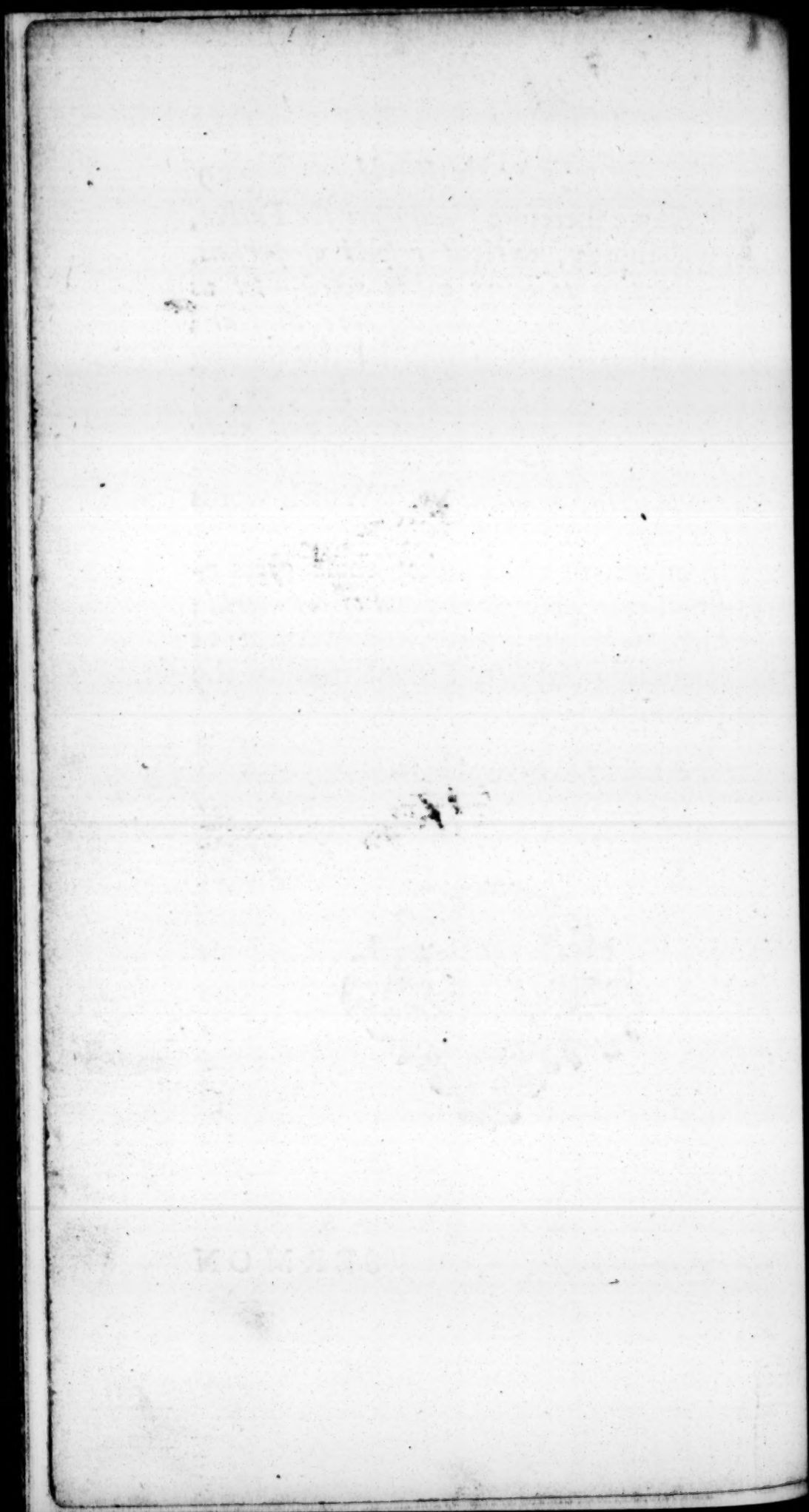
want ! As we therefore * call upon the Father, who will shortly, without respect of persons, judge according to every man's work, let us pass the time of our sojourning here in fear ; and in a diligent preparation for the coming of our Lord. When the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all the works that are therein, be burnt up. Which words lead our thoughts to the

4th important article, that these great events shall take place at the end of our world ; of which, with the proper improvement of this interesting subject, I shall treat in the next Discourse.

* 1 Pet. i. 17. 2d Ep. iii. 10.



SERMON





S E R M O N II.

Of the End of the World.

M A T T. XXV. 31, 32.

When the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.



IN the preceding Discourse on these words, I undertook to treat of this Proposition—*That the Son of Man shall appear at the end of the world, in a most solemn and glorious manner, in order to his judging all mankind.*—And that I might establish your belief of this important truth, and persuade you to live as those who expect the coming of your Lord, I proposed,

I. To

- I. To describe and prove this *glorious appearance* of the *Son of Man* at the end of the world, in order to the *general Judgment*. And,
- II. To show you the *wisdom* of God discoverable in this dispensation, and the *practical* uses of it.

I. I have in part given you the *description* and *proof* of this glorious appearance of our Lord at the end of the world, in order to his judging all the human race, under the three following heads.

1. The *forerunners* of our Lord's coming to Judgment will be most *tremendous*, proper to strike the minds of men with the deepest awe, and to introduce the last Judgment, and the end of the world.

2. After these *alarms* given to the world to expect and prepare for his coming, the *Son of Man*, who is also the *Son of God*, shall descend from heaven in *his own glory*, in the *glory of his Father*, and of all his holy angels, and with *ten thousand of his saints*.

3. The *Son of God* being arrived, shall seat himself on a *majestic throne*, the *trump of God* shall sound and rouse all the dead, who at the *command* of the *Judge* shall resume their bodies, and return to life; all the *living* shall be *changed*, and the whole human

man race be brought by the *angels* before the Judgment Seat of Christ. It remains that I treat of the

4th head. This glorious coming of our Lord shall be at the end of the world, that he may judge at once the whole human race. The truth of this is evident from various testimonies of revelation; it will be enough to name two or three. The words of our Lord cited before are expresse to this purpose. *⁊ As therefore the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, so shall it be at the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.* My Text also is full to this purpose; and to name no more, how plain and how awful is the declaration of St. Peter. *⁂ The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of Judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat; the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up. The present being a state of probation for all the*
C children

children of men, it is most reasonable to think, that the day of Judgment, of dispensing fully and exactly rewards or punishments to mankind, should not come, untill all whose natures were suited to the frame of the present world, who were designed to act their several parts in like circumstances, and amidst like difficulties and temptations, and who were to cultivate the same virtue and piety, and designed for the same happiness, till all these had passed their time of trial here. The Judge being equal to the work of judging all mankind at once, and this interposition of his being extraordinarily great and magnificent, it is not reasonable to suppose, that it will be repeated oftner than is necessary. Besides, it seems in itself most reasonable, that a race of beings, who have acted their part in like circumstances, who have practised the same fidelity and obedience, and are intitled to the same reward, or who have indulged the same vicious passions, and must sink into the same misery, should all appear in Judgment together. The divine goodness, and love of virtue and piety will be as greatly, nay *more gloriously* displayed, in rewarding at once all obedience of the same kind; and the divine holiness and abhorrence of sin in condemning most publickly, and at once, vice and wickedness of the same kind, as in twenty distinct days of hearing and deciding.

Further,

Further, as God infinitely wise, when he ^a *first* fixed the plan of our world, determined the number of men who should take their birth from *Adam* in successive generations, who according to this determination became ^b *mortal by his sin*, and are *restored* again to life through the *obedience* unto death of the Son of God, the *second Adam*; it seems most worthy the divine wisdom, and to manifest a more extensive reach of thought, as well as superior power and goodness, to design and effect, that all who were involved in the same common calamity, and who are to be redeemed from it by the same person, should appear at the same time; to give at once a compleat view of the malignity of sin and disobedience to God, and of the merit, the goodness and the power of the Son of God, and of the infinite delight which the God, ^c *who is love*, takes in rewarding goodness and obedience.

Nor is it less worthy the wisdom, benevolence, and holiness of the Deity to appoint, that the fate of the *visible material* world, on which we live, should be connected with the fate of its *inhabitants*, and both be consummated together. This earth is a stage, raised on purpose for mankind to act their parts upon it; and when their time of acting is over, it is of course to be taken down, having

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^a Acts xv. 18. xvii. 26. 1 Pet. i. 20. ^b 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45. Rom v. 18. ^c 1 John iv. 16.

ving fully answered the end for which it was erected. Revelation informs us, that upon the disobedience of the first pair, an alteration was made in the *natural* world. When sin entered the *moral* world, imperfection and natural evils took their place in the *material* world. It became the wisdom and holiness of God to order, that a place, which would be the scene of imperfect virtue and piety, and of great wickedness, should be a scene of but imperfect pleasures, and of many evils and pains.

^d *The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God—* by a beautiful figure, as the world is sometimes said to *praise* God, so here with equal beauty and propriety, the frame of the world may be said to *wait* for that change in it, which is really to be desired, and which is designed one day to take place, — *it waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same, either the Devil, or Adam; and it waiteth in hope; that the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. This interpretation may receive further light and confirmation, from this declaration of God, when he sentenced Adam for his transgression. ^e Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee saying, thou shalt not eat of it: Cursed is*

^d Rom. viii. 19, 20.

^e Genes. iii. 17.

the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life ; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee. It is evident to one who curiously observes the present frame of the world, that though in every part we can discover the glorious signatures of unbounded wisdom, power, and goodness, yet it is not fitted to be a scene of *perfect* happiness to man ; and it wears in a variety of instances the marks of God's displeasure against the sins of men, and particularly of his ^f *drowning the world*. What large tracts of the earth are barren, or will yield nothing to men, without repeated and obstinate labours ? To how many unpleasing and unhealthy changes is the temperature of the air subject ? What one climate is there, which if it has peculiar advantages, has not also its peculiar disadvantages ? And how impossible is it for any man, even the best, to be *completely* happy, as the natural world is now constituted ; even though all mankind should conspire to make him so ? These and the like instances, which some ^g *atheistical* philosophers would urge as objections against the Being and Providence of God, and the world's being formed by a most wise and good mind, are, instead of objections, bright evidences of his wisdom, holiness and goodness. It became the *wisdom* and *purity* of God, to leave

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^f See Ray's Phys. Theol. Disc. 2d. Revel. examined with Candour. v. 1. Diff. 11. ^g See Lucret. L. v. l. 135.

in a world abounding with vice, the tokens of his displeasure in the imperfection of its frame, that he might thus rouse the thoughtless and sensual to an apprehension of their guilt, and excite a strong concern to recover the favour of their maker, to cultivate a more perfect virtue, and thus to prepare themselves for a more happy state. The *altruistic* goodness of God is also visible in this constitution. Mankind not being intended to dwell always on this earth, but being on their trial for another and higher state of existence, in a capacity of cultivating a virtuous and divine temper, and enjoying the satisfactions of it in a lower degree here, and obliged to prefer these above all sensual and earthly indulgences, if they would enjoy them in perfection in another state; it manifests the divine goodness, when mankind were sunk into so strong an inclination to present things, and their appetites to sensual good grown so eager, to mix imperfection, pain and disappointment, with external enjoyments, and bodily pleasures; to prevent our doating fatally upon them, and neglecting the nobler happiness for which we were made. Imperfect as the world and its enjoyments are, yet how few heartily and steadily prefer the satisfactions of knowledge, virtue and devotion, and treat the world with a just indifference? How many are fatally enchanted and ruined by it, though its beauty be so much sullied, and its charms faded?

ded? How many then would be deluded to their ruin, how few happy, were this world more tempting? The labour necessary to get provisions from the earth is a proper corrective, or preservative against luxury and vice. The frequent unwelcome changes in the external frame of things, naturally dispose to seek happiness *within* ourselves, in the good order and improvement of our minds; and to depend for happiness on a higher and more certain cause, a more unchanging good, the eternal God, and of course to qualify ourselves for his favour by cultivating a disposition like his, an habitual preference of what is just, benevolent, and morally beautiful. The evils we are obliged to endure, give also room for practising patience and resignation to the divine disposal, and an integrity invincible by sufferings, and for a tender compassion and a generous charity to the afflicted, and thus prepare us for a greater reward, and a more exalted happiness in the end. The frame of the world is then you see admirably suited to the present state of mankind, as *probationers* for *immortality*; and that the *seeming* blots and imperfections are *real* beauties, and instances of consummate wisdom to an eye which takes into its view the whole plan. But then, as it is an instance of the divine wisdom and goodness to continue this scene, as long as men, subject to imperfection and vice, and on their trial for a

more perfect state, are to act their parts upon it, so these same attributes require, that it should be removed, when the ends are answered for which it was erected. Imperfect as it is, it will be *too good* for the habitation of obstinate condemned sinners, who have trifled with the divine mercy, ^h *turned his grace into wantonness*, and are become the just objects of his abhorrence. And every one will grant it is not *perfect enough* to be a seat of happiness for those, on whom God will pour out the riches of his benignity, whom at a vast expence he has fitted for compleat felicity, and will therefore certainly put in possession of it.

It is therefore consonant to *Reason*, as well as determined by *Revelation*, that the day of Judgment for all mankind should be at the end of the world; and that this fabrick should be destroyed, or quite changed, when mankind, for whom it was erected, shall be removed from it, or intirely changed. We are therefore justified in regarding those subterraneous fires, which now frequently break forth, deform the face of the earth, and punish its wicked inhabitants, as part of those dreadful magazines, which the divine vengeance hath prepared against that day, when deluges of flame shall every where burst out, overspread the whole earth, and destroy all the seats and instruments of human pride, luxury,

† Jude ver. 4.

luxury, and sensuality — when cities, palaces, groves, gardens, flowry fields, hills gently rising clothed with verdure and fruits, and pouring down on the valleys beneath them streams which enrich every part, delight the eye, and charm the ear; when these shall all be lost in one burning waste, one horrid uniform blaze — when the immense watry stores of the ocean shall evaporate into smoke, and leave its womb dry, and a prey to the prevailing fire — and the everlasting mountains crack, totter, fall, and melt away — when the wicked under condemnation before the tribunal of the Son of God, shall with regret and despair, see all their hopes and means of pleasure and happiness perish — and the righteous, with triumph behold this imperfect scene vanishing, and the earth, cast like gold into the fire, to come forth refined, separated from all its dross, and perfect as its future inhabitants.

Let this close the explication and proof of the Proposition with which I began, *That the Son of Man shall appear at the end of the world, in a most solemn and glorious manner for the judgment of all mankind.* Let us now, as persons most nearly interested in these great events, make such serious and wise reflections upon them, as may happily influence our future conduct, and our acquittal before this grand tribunal. And,

I. Let

1. Let us admire the *wisdom* of God, who hath so well suited the *awful preparations* to our Lord's coming, and the *glory* with which he shall appear, to the *greatness* and *importance* of the *dispensation*, which will then be closed, and of the *change* which will thus be introduced. It is fit that a day which will determine the fates of millions of millions of reasonable, as to their spiritual part, and immortal beings, for whom this world, with all its splendid lights and rich furniture was prepared; yea more, for whose recovery and perfection the Son of God condescended to leave heaven, become incarnate and die; it was fit that a day, which should close such a dispensation with the resurrection and appearance of all mankind before the Judgment Seat of Christ, should be thus solemnly ushered in; the face of the *sun turned into darkness*, and *the face of the moon into blood*, the *stars* appearing to *fall from heaven*, the *sea* and the *waves roaring*, and *mens hearts failing them for fear* of the devouring fires every where breaking out, and of the approaching majesty of the Son of God, descending from heaven in his *own glory*, in the *glory of his Father*, and of all *his holy angels and saints*. At the creation of our world, ¹ *the morning stars sung for joy*; that is, the angels, who for their brightness may be called morning stars, or because they were thought to preside over,

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¹ Job xxxviii. 7.

to guide and move the stars of heaven. The descent of the divine Majesty to give laws to a single nation at mount ^k *Sinai*, how awful, how splendid was it! The *birth* ^l of our future Judge was introduced by a new *star* appearing in heaven, and by a *multitude of the heavenly host* singing and praising God. His ^m *death* also, which was greatly subservient to the design that will be compleated at the last Judgment, how magnificently was it solemnized! An unusual *darkness* for hours veiled the *sun*, the *earth shook*, the *rocks rent*, and the *graves were opened*. And surely it is becoming the wisdom of the supreme disposer, to suit the forerunners and attendants of our Lord's second coming to the importance of the concluding dispensation. And I appeal to any reasonable mind, whether any scenes can be conceived more grand and awful, than those which from the *scripture* I have represented to you, as introducing it; and whether the *scripture* account, as it fills all our apprehensions of greatness, does not also rise above them? It has been observed by a ⁿ *fine writer*, to the advantage of the Christian Revelation, and as a proof of the divine inspiration of the author and first publishers of it, how much their accounts of this tremendous event exceed for sublimity and grandeur

^k Exod. ix. ^l Matt. ii. Luke ii. ^m Matt. xxvii. 45. Luke xxiii. 44. ⁿ Archbishop Tillotson, Vol. II. Sec. 57.

deur any representations of this sort, given by the most elevated genius among the *beathen*. Particularly how low and trifling compared with this, the account given of the Judgment after death by ° *Virgil*; who is yet allowed by all to have possessed as great and correct an imagination as any *Pagan* writer. What are the *Stygian Lake*, the Ferryman *Charon*, the Dog *Cerberus*, the Court of *Pluto*, or the *three Judges* of departed souls, though raised by all the pomp of metaphors, and force of numbers, for majesty and terror, if compared with the accounts of a future Judgment given in the New Testament, particularly with this short account of *St. John*. *And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead small and great stand before God, and the books were opened, and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged by the things written in the books according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and the grave delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.* Was it not the knowlege of this excellent Religion, that gave to *Milton's* poetry a nobleness and sublimity, with which no *beathen* poets can compare? Could the adopt-
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ed *Son of a Carpenter*, or poor *Fishermen*, destitute of the improvements of a polite education, have given us such rational and grand descriptions, if the *Son of Man* had not also been the *Son of God*; and if his Spirit had not irradiated and enlarged the minds of his Apostles? If he who is to bear the chief part in the transactions of this day, had not by them informed us of it's real and astonishing greatness?

2. We may from hence form some worthy apprehensions of the *dignity, glory, and power* of our exalted *Saviour*, who shall come thus attended to judge the world; and at whose voice all the dead shall rise; and learn also the *dignity* hence reflected on all his *faithful servants*, on all true Christians. Divinely great must be his dignity, ^p *to whom* the Father hath committed all Judgment, whom all his angels in all their splendor attend and obey, and ^q *who is Lord both of the dead and of the living*. To whose *authority* even death, which bounds the power of the mightiest earthly sovereigns, can set no limits, but death itself is his vassal: and they who have been a thousand years dead, and their dust scattered to the farthest regions of the world, are as intirely under his command to punish or reward, as the living. Equally great must be his *power* ^r, *to whom the Father hath given* to

^p John v. 22.

^q Rom. xiv. 10.

^r John v.

to have life in himself, and to produce an effect like this. — To give life in an instant to millions of millions, the creating whom, and indowing them with mortal bodies in the space of some thousand years, is justly reckoned a glorious instance of God's almighty power. How immeasurably great the power vested in the Redeemer, which not only in the *twinkling of an eye* repairs these bodies, but renders countless numbers of them *glorious, incorruptible, and immortal!* A power which at once controuls the earth, the sea, the air, and death and hell, and makes all conspire to serve the ends, and advance the glory of his government! And how great will be his glory, when from the ruins of the earth and sea, and the spoils of time and death, he shall raise in an instant so many regular animated forms; of which an innumerable multitude shall possess a splendor and beauty superior to what this world ever saw, and resembling the glories of their sovereign; and the whole collection wait his disposal with the profoundest awe and submission, and by his word be determined to consummate happiness or misery! Who ever read the relation of the army with which *Xerxes* invaded *Greece*, consisting, according to the ^f *Historian*, of near *two millions* of men, without a secret astonishment at the power of a mortal; who could have so great a number

^f Herodotus L. VII.

ber of his fellows at his disposal, and ready at all hazards to gratify his pleasure, and even sacrifice their lives? But what is the majesty of this prince, or what are these subjects, to the majesty and subjects of the Redeemer? The dominion of *Xerxes* was short lived at the longest, and liable to be broken or overturned by the inconstancy and treachery of his subjects, or by the courage or policy of others; and during his command he was obliged to the folly, ambition, or covetousness of some, for the subjection of the rest. Whereas the power of the Redeemer is vested in himself, and is absolute; ten thousand times ten thousand of angels, who excel in wisdom and strength, are intirely devoted to him; and all the millions of millions of mankind, including *Xerxes*, and every other sovereign, depend wholly for life and happiness on his pleasure. His dominion also is everlasting, and he cannot only command them while alive, but raise them from the dead, and dispose of all for eternity, as to him seems best.

In consequence of this, how great is the dignity and happiness of all true Christians, who are related to this august monarch, as *members* to their head, as *friends* and *favourites* to their great master; yea, who are indulged by him in the title of *‘Brethren!* With reason may they value themselves on this

his relation, and with zeal and fidelity should they endeavour to act up to it. With what indifference may they look down on the grandeur of the world, on kings, on every thing that has the appearance of magnificence, when it would tempt them from their allegiance to the King of Kings, or terrify them into sin: when it would stand in competition with the honour of being approved by this glorious sovereign now, and publicly owned, and eternally rewarded by him hereafter! It would not have been a thousandth part so much beneath the *favourite* of the *Persian* monarch, or beneath *Xerxes* himself, to flatter the meanest *Grecian*, and tremble at his frown, as it is beneath a Christian to be overawed by vice, though clothed with the imperial purple, and to suffer the smiles or frowns of such a prince to take him off from his regards and obedience to the Lord of life. Let me add, what terror does this greatness and power of our Lord speak to all the unfaithful and wicked! Though you take shelter in death, in the bottom of the seas, or the depths of the earth, and the parts that once composed your bodies be scattered to the most distant extremities of the world, you cannot thus escape his vengeance. When he speaks the word, the earth, the sea, the grave, shall yield you to his justice.

3. We may hence learn how acceptable to God are piety and goodness, the resurrection of all mankind to life, being the reward granted to the perfection of these in our Saviour, to his perfect obedience unto death. When we read, that by the wilful transgression of the first parents of mankind death entered, and prevailed over all their progeny, a secret horror overspreads our minds, and we tremble at the thought of a God so averse to disobedience. The resurrection of all mankind to life yields a demonstration equally clear, and infinitely more amiable, of the holiness of God, of his love to piety and goodness in man, and his delight to reward them; who as he punished the *disobedience* of the first *Adam* with death to himself and all his descendants, rewards the perfect holiness and obedience of the second, with granting him a power to restore all mankind to a life they lost, and to a capacity of rendering this life everlasting, and compleatly happy. "For as in or by *Adam* all die, so by *Christ* shall all be made alive. And as by one man's disobedience, many, that is the whole human race, were made sinners, subjected to death the punishment of *Adam's* sin, and thus treated as sinners, so by one man's obedience shall many, the same number who were made sinners by *Adam's* disobedience, all mankind, be made righteous; be restored to life the reward of

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* 1 Cor. xv. 22. Rom. v. 18, 19.

righteousness, thus treated as righteous, and in their resurrection be freed from all appearance of sharing in *Adam's* sin, and stand or fall for eternity by their own obedience or disobedience, being sentenced ^w *according to what they themselves have done, every one in his body, whether good or bad.* Thus as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. How greatly must God love piety and goodness, who rewards the perfect obedience of the Redeemer, his intire love and devotedness to his Father, and his generous goodness and compassion to mankind, and particularly his dying for their salvation, in so illustrious a manner, as on account of this to restore the world *Adam* had ruined! What greater evidence can the Deity give of his love to holiness than this, wherein we see Omnipotence exerted, and as it were labouring, to repair, in an instant, all the ruin the sin of man had introduced, and making all nature to concur to evidence his approbation of the perfection of holiness in his Son made flesh, and to reward it? It is not on account of his relation to the Father as his only begotten Son, that he thus honours him, but ^x *because he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* This God is unchangeable in his love to holiness

^w 2 Cor. v. 10.

^x Philip. ii. 8.

linefs and goodness. What encouragement have we then to imitate the piety, purity, and generous benevolence of the Redeemer, being assured, that the God who so gloriously rewarded these dispositions in his Son, will equally reward them in us, in proportion to the exactness of our imitation. As nearly as we resemble the Son in those virtues, so nearly shall we resemble him in glory and bliss. *To him that overcometh, saith our Master, will I give to sit with me on my throne, as I overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.* Therefore,

4. The glory and dignity to which our Lord is raised, and in which he shall come to judge the world, should excite christians to a chearful imitation of their Lord in doing good, and promoting his interest amidst disgrace and sufferings; and should arm them against all the approaches and terrors of the world, against the contempt with which the author of our Religion, his Religion, and the sincere professors of it, are treated by the great, and powerful, and reputed wise; and against all those sufferings, to which our adherence to him, and the discharge of our duty may expose us. The disciples of our Lord at first thought it a hard saying, that they must *take up their cross and follow him*, and be content, though despised, ill treated, and persecuted, and always poor and in want, on

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account

^y Revel. iii. 21.

^z Matt. x. 38. xvi. 21.

account of their devotedness to their Master, and hearty prosecution of the most generous design of the temporal and eternal happiness of mankind. And they were scandalized at their Master's cross, that the Son of God should be *delivered into the hands of wicked men, be scourged, spit upon, crucified, and numbered with transgressors*. But these prejudices held them no longer than their ignorance of the second coming of our Lord, and the honours and rewards his faithful followers would then receive. When they fully understood our Saviour's promise, ^a *Ye are they who have continued with me in my temptations, and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; and ye shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel:* when they fully understood and firmly believed the design of his coming *in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory*, that ^b *they who pierced him should mourn*, and they who insulted him be humbled in the dust; they were then no longer offended at the cross of Christ, but gloried in it, and in their sufferings for his sake, and ^c *Christ crucified to them was the wisdom of God, and the power of God*. And let any one who considers what has been represented of the glorious coming of Christ to Judgment, say, whether this was not a reasonable opinion, choice and practice.

^a Luke xxii. 28.
^b 24.

^c Revel. i. 7.

^d 1 Cor.

practice. What though it may be our lot to live in an age, when our Religion is insulted by the men of *sneer* and *banter*, who sit in the seat of the scornful; what though we may be treated as poor spirited timorous enthusiasts, for regarding the laws of Christ, imitating his virtues, abstaining from indulgences forbidden by him, and zealously serving his interests; what though the great and powerful despise and treat with injuries a Religion, which would lay low their pride, curb their power, and restrain their licentious passions; and hate those, who by professing and practising this Religion, are a continual reproof and torment to them: what though we may be almost alone in the profession and practice of genuine Christianity, in the imitation of our Lord in piety, resignation, humility, beneficence, and a steady preference of the satisfactions of goodness and devotion, of the honour of God, and the interests of our Redeemer, before the pomp, pleasures, or riches of the world, and be pointed at as fools for our choice; what a trifle is all this to one, who has in his eye the abasement and glories of his great Master, and the solemn pomp of the last day! When a new scene shall take place, when they who scoffing said, *where is the promise of his coming*, shall cry *to the rocks to fall on them, and hide them from his face, and from his wrath.* When they

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* 2 Pet. iii. 4. Rev. vi. 16, 17.

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i. 24.

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* 2 Pet. iii. 4. Rev. vi. 16, 17.

who treated us as fools for preferring what God approved, for imitating his Son, and despising the allurements of the world, shall hang their heads with confusion and astonishment at their own folly; and by the visible despair, which is the fruit of their conduct, own the wisdom of ours, which was the opposite of theirs. When the late great men and princes and mighty men, who said, *let us break his bands asunder, and cast his yoke from us*, shall be had in derision by him, appearing before his throne as submissive, and as destitute of all support and distinction as their meanest vassals, and receive a disgrace, great as their abused power and influence. When millions of attendant angels shall crown with their approbation the faithful servants of Christ, and abundantly compensate them for any reproaches now cast upon them, yea, when all wicked men and devils shall approve them. Good God, what a mere trifle is all the honour or disgrace of the present life, compared with the honours or infamy of the last day! How cheaply are its glories purchased, by suffering persecution and contempt here! How happy they who dare to imitate the example of the Son of God; and who being conformed to his humiliation and sufferings, are assured of being conformed also to his glory and blessedness! The mistaken apprehensions of men cannot alter the real nature of things. Men's saying there is no God,

God, or that Jesus is not the Son of God, will not destroy the existence of God, or the relation of Jesus to him. And men's despising the warnings of his appearance will not prevent ^e *his coming* at the time appointed, *in flaming fire to take vengeance on those who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel of his Son.*

5. We may learn hence the *dignity* and *excellence* of the *christian* dispensation, which shall not receive a period but with the world; nor until the happiness of all who shall be meet for life eternal is accomplished. The ^f *Apostle* urges it with justice, as an argument of the excellence of the Gospel above the Law, that the Law was designed only to introduce the other, and to vanish at its appearing; to maintain for a while the knowledge and worship of the true God in the world, and by its precepts, sacrifices, and other rites to make men sensible of their need of a Saviour, and to prepare them for receiving him. Whereas the Gospel, as it exceeded the Law and all other Revelations in the dignity of the person by whom it was revealed, so also in the nobleness of its design, and the perpetuity of its duration. Till the sun ceases to rise or set, or this earth to revolve regularly around it, till summer and winter cease their succession, and till mankind cease

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^e 2 Theff. i. 8.

^f See the Epistle to the Hebrews, and Galatians, ch. iii. and iv.

to live on this world as probationers for the perfection of goodness, and of happiness, the Gospel institution shall not cease. And when it ceases, it is not as imperfect, and incapable of answering its great end, or as giving place to any other, but because the scheme of God for the happiness of man is then filled up; and all meet for it are sealed for life eternal. It is reckoned a mark of the superior genius of some * Writers, and is a praise conferred on their uncommon merit, that their writings have long survived them, and shall live as long as the world. This honour belongs to the Gospel, not only on account of the excellence of its doctrines and precepts, which will cause it to be read, believed, and obeyed, as long as there is good sense or virtue in the world; but the fate of the natural world is linked with that of the Gospel, and this great machine shall no longer be preserved in its order and motions, when the purposes of the other are answered. With what regard should this inspire us for those divine writings; with what care should we study them, and govern our conduct by their directions, esteeming it of the greatest importance to ourselves to fall in with their great design, when they contain the last and most

* Then all the wide extended skie,
And all the harmonious Worlds on high,
And *Virgil's* sacred Work shall die.

most perfect scheme of infinite wisdom and goodness for our eternal felicity; and when not only we ourselves shall be determined to immortal bliss, or everlasting destruction, by their decisions, but the fate of all the material and animal world hangs upon it?

6. That this world shall have a period, when our Lord comes to Judgment, should engage us to admire and imitate the wisdom of those, who chuse their happiness in the divine favour, in an imitation of the virtues of his Son now, and in a share in his honours and rewards at last; a happiness which shall then commence in its full perfection to endure for ever, when the happiness of the sensual worldling shall for ever end. Know vain man who makest this world thy God, who preferrest the pleasures of wealth before the satisfactions of piety, justice, and charity; the indulgences of sensuality before the satisfactions of devotion, of the love and resemblance of the Deity, and of a mind raised above fleshly and perishing pursuits; and who preferrest the pomp of this world, and making a figure at present in the eyes of ill-judging mortals, before the honour of the divine approbation, before the satisfactions and triumphs of conscious goodness, and the glories of the great day, and of immortality. Know vain man, thou shalt not only be removed by death from the portion and happiness thou hast chosen, thy soul shall be divested

vested of all its real and imaginary good, and turned naked and destitute into the invisible world, to pine and languish till the day of Judgment; but thy God itself, the object of thy desires, hopes and labours, shall be destroyed; to cut thee off from any vain hopes of happiness in a return to it, this world shall be burnt up. And what wilt thou then do? Say now, who is the *wisest*, who the *happiest* man? Is not he so who now enjoys the world agreeably to the rules of Reason and Religion, passes through it as a stranger, and who when this scene shall pass away, shall not be abandoned to utter want and wretchedness, but be received to a heavenly country, endless pleasures, immortal glory, and to treasures which cannot be taken or waste away? Say now, who was the *wise* man? He certainly who refused a tempting opportunity of forbidden pleasure or unjust gain, and scorned to sacrifice his conscience to the opinions of the world, to the applauses or censures of men. Are not the honours of the Redeemer's Court, a sufficient recompence for the misapplied disgrace of the present scene? Are not those mansions of bliss which are prepared for him, a sufficient compensation for the guilty pleasures he denied himself? Is it not better to regard and pursue, above all things, our interests in the heavenly country, which can never be ruined, and pleasures as lasting, as they are perfect and valuable,

valuable, than to toil, and sacrifice thy ease, virtue, conscience, true peace of mind, and the purity and perfection of thy nature, to the low debasing pursuits of the present world? Since all the vain opinions of men, all the opportunities for sensual pleasure, all the seats of human grandeur, and all their riches, shall receive at once an intire end; and when the Saint enters on a happiness which shall last as long as his own immortal nature, or the eternal God, thou shalt be condemned to pine and suffer under tormenting want and fierce desires, shalt curse thy folly when it is for ever too late to be wiser; and see the value of the heaven from which thou art excluded, when thou wilt not be able to take refuge in a world, thou wouldst then despise. We all profess to believe these truths, but when shall we be wise enough to act with steddiness, according to our belief? When readily sacrifice opportunities for sensual pleasure to the pleasures of devotion, or opportunities for gain, to those of laying up heavenly treasure by doing good to mankind? At the appearance of the concluding scene of the world, we shall all own it to have been our wisdom; and why will you not act now, as otherwise you will wish, too late, you had acted? Your convictions now, if pursued, will lead you to everlasting honour and happiness; neglected now, they will

will then only aggravate your misery and despair.

7. The appearance of the Angels in all this splendour at the day of Judgment, is a proper reward of their zeal and devotedness to God and to Christ, of their hearty ingagement in advancing the interests of holiness, of their condescending love to mankind, and all the labours they have undergone for their happiness. As they have imitated the virtues and ² shared the labours of the Redeemer, it is fit they should share the honours of the last day, and the satisfactions arising from the accomplishment of the grand design; from putting an utter end to sin and death, to the interests and power of Satan, from compleating the happiness of so many millions, who are never more to sin, or be in danger, and displaying the wisdom and justice of God in the destruction of the incorrigible. How high will their transports rise, when they see in its height of power and majesty the kingdom of the Son, which they have all along laboured to advance; see him acknowledged and obeyed by all mankind, the most obstinate bending beneath his authority, and trembling at his power, whom they have revered, loved, and delightfully served! How great will be their satisfaction in beholding the honours conferred on the good, and conducting them to the glory and
bliss

² Heb. i. 14.

bliss of heaven; whose virtue they have assisted, and for whose sake they have often descended from heaven! With what joy and triumph will they behold the grand adversary *Satan* and his Angels, whom they have so long opposed and counterworked, *shut up in the bottomless pit*, and incapacitated ever more to tempt or destroy! And as these triumphs of the holy Angels will be very great, and their satisfactions rise very high, so in proportion will their joys and triumphs rise; who have acted on earth, in a greater or less degree, like guardian Angels to men, been devoted to the interests of the Redeemer, and laboured to serve the everlasting blessedness of those whom he died to save, and to their utmost, in their several stations, endeavoured to subvert the empire of Sin and the Devil.

8. That the day of general Judgment shall be at the end of the world, accounts for God's bearing so long with a sinful race; and shows, that it is not owing to an indifference in regard of holiness or sin. ^h St. *Peter* overturns the vain hopes of sinners, built on the divine forbearance, by putting them in mind, that the day of the Lord would certainly come, *when the earth, and all the works that are therein, shall be burnt up*. This world being in its frame adapted to a state of trial, and of imperfect virtue and piety;
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^h 2 Pet. iii. 4.

and it being expedient that it should continue until all whose nature was alike had been tried upon it; and it being appointed that this great stage should be then destroyed, and all who had acted on it be judged; it is evidently a vain hope with which sinners flatter themselves, on account of the patience and forbearance of God. They might as well imagine, because every offender against the State is not immediately tried and executed, that the Sovereign is not an enemy to rebellion, and will not punish it; though the offenders are immediately committed to safe custody, have a day fixed for their trial, suffer the miseries of imprisonment, and of sad prospects of approaching condemnation and death. What though some *thousands of years* may yet intervene between thy death, presuming sinner, and the last Judgment, as will certainly be the case of many notorious sinners of past ages, thou hast yet no reason, on this account, to encourage thyself with hopes of impunity, or of sleeping in the dust, unregarded by thy offended Sovereign. Immediately after death *thy*ⁱ *soul returns to God*, will know its doom, and ^k be kept in safe custody, to feel the torments of thy own guilty reflections, and ^l raging and unsatisfied desires, to pine under the want of all good, and be tortured with ^m *the fearful looking for of judgment*

ⁱ Eccl. xii. 7.^k Acts i. 25.^l Luke xvi 24.^m Hebr. x. 27.

ment and fiery indignation, which will consume all the adversaries of God, and of his Son Jesus. Is it not much juster reasoning, a righteous God must abhor sin and disobedience perfectly, since when mankind have had a proper time of trial, he will even burn the world, which has been the scene of their guilt and disobedience; as by the *Jewish Law* he ordered the house infected with Leprosy to be intirely razed? The delay of thy punishment will only be an aggravation of it, thou wilt thus have the more witnesses of thy guilt and condemnation; and be tortured with the sight of the more millions of happy spirits, who having triumphed over the temptations and opposition to which thou hast yielded, shall fully demonstrate, that thy guilt and misery were thy wilful choice, and shall therefore be justly thy portion.

Finally. What terror does this speak to all the wicked, though the most haughty, great, and powerful of men; and how should it humble their pride, confound their insolence, and wither their strength! You now perhaps triumph in successful wickedness, and are surrounded with flatterers, who gild over your vices; while persons who would show you their deformity, show you your real selves, dare not, or cannot approach you. You glory in the strength of your alliances, the number of your subjects or dependants, or the greatness of your riches; which make
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you gazed and wondered at by the thoughtless vulgar, and place you above the reach of human justice. Swelling with pride you say, our Power, our Lands, our Wealth, are our own; *who is Lord over us? Is there knowledge in the most high?* How prosperous, how triumphant are we! While yonder grovelling wretches, who are scrupulously just and religious, and by self-denial, purity and charity strive to please God, and hope to be happy in his favour, are deceived in their expectations. Suppose this to be your state and your language, and that a righteous Providence does not in this life break in pieces your visionary happiness, but it lasts till death. Yet know, that death will put an end, a certain dreadful end, to all your Pride, and Insolence, and Power; and a righteous Judgment follow to compleat your confusion and misery. ⁿ *For our God will come, and will not keep silence, a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. You shall be cast into destruction in a moment.* What will it avail you to have been for a few days exempt from human justice, when you shall lie open to the vengeance of God, and the condemnation of his Son? What will it avail to have smiled and vaunted a while, amidst successful crimes and servile flatteries? What horrors will succeed to these, when you shall see the Son of God descending

ⁿ Pl. 1. 3.

scending from heaven with all his Angels and Saints, and you, who have been the idols of the unthinking many, shall be found objects only of contempt and abhorrence in the sight of God, of Jesus, of all his holy Angels, of all good men, and be despised even by your former base flatterers; shall hide your heads in the dust but in vain; shall be draged from your hiding places, and become the publick abhorrence of all mankind, and the sport of devils! What would thousands of guards and dependents avail you against the power of the Redeemer, when *he shall come with his mighty Angels in flaming fire to take vengeance of those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of his Son?* I cannot envy your short lived triumphs, your wickedness forbids our pity; and contempt is all that will remain for you with God, with the great Judge, with good Angels and good men; everlasting contempt, attended with the horrors of a self-condemning conscience, and the torments of that ° *lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.* May the apprehension of this rouse every sinner to flee from the wrath to come; and every good man ^p to be diligent, that at the coming of our Lord, he may be found of him in peace without spot and blameless. Amen.

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° Revel. xxi. 8.

^p 2 Pet. iii. 14.

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S E R M O N I I I .

Of the Certainty of a future general Judgment.

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For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



HIS most important truth of a future general Judgment is mentioned by St. Paul to the Corinthians, as a reason why he made it the great labour of his life to be accepted of Christ; and as the great argument which he urged upon mankind to persuade them to repent and obey the Gospel. And can a stronger motive be urged? If we all act under the constant observation of God, who sees our hearts, and takes notice of every

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thought and action ; if ^a *as it is appointed for all men once to die, so after this the Judgment* ; and if at the last great day, the eternal states of all will be determined for happiness or misery, according as they have obeyed or disobeyed the will of God, whether made known to them by the light of Reason alone, or by that and the Gospel-Revelation in conjunction ; if this be the truth of our case, then certainly nothing concerns us in comparison of this, that we know the will of God, and that we practise it ; that if we have offended we immediately repent, and ^b *be reconciled to God, and bring forth fruits meet for repentance* ; and heartily endeavour that our future conduct be such, as will procure for us the full approbation of our Judge ; and through the immense goodness of God, and the merits of Christ, the reward of eternal life and happiness. And this, my Friends, is undoubtedly our real case. Every one of us, as surely as he now lives the creature of God, *reasonable and free*, and acquainted with the Gospel, which ^c *teaches, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world ; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ* ; will after death be summoned before

^a Hebr. ix. 27.

^c Tit. ii. 12.

^b 2 Cor. v. 20. Matt. iii. 8.

before the tribunal of the Son of God, where ^d every work shall be brought into judgment, with every secret thing; where glory, honour, and immortality shall be rendered to a patient continuance in well doing, but indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish to every soul of man that doth evil.

We all profess to believe this, but how few live as if they believed it! How few avoid with their utmost care all those instances of sin and disobedience, to which the Gospel expressly threatens the displeasure of God, and the damnation of hell! How few are as much afraid of being *damned*, as of being *poor* and *wretched* in this world! Who strives as earnestly to be approved of Christ and to be happy for ever, as to please men, and to be rich and easy during a short life? It were impossible we should act at this rate, did we seriously and often consider the great truth delivered by the Apostle in the Text, *That we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This therefore, my Friends, I would now call you seriously to consider; and this the Providence of God, which is continually summoning some or other of our Acquaintance out of this life into the everlasting state, calls us also to consider. God

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^d Eccl. xii. 14. Rom. ii. 7.

grant we may be so wise as to comply with his calls; and so consider and prepare for the strict account, which we must all soon render to the ^e Judge of quick and dead, that he may approve us, and adjudge us to life eternal! May none of us render our guilt and our final condemnation more dreadful, by continuing to despise the warning!

St. *Paul's* words contain several important Particulars, relating to the future Judgment, viz. the Certainty of it, *we must all appear*; the Person appointed to be Judge, *before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; the Manner of this Judgment, as most publick and equitable, *we must all appear, and receive every man according to that he hath done*; the Persons to be tried, *all must appear*; and the Actions for which we are to be accountable, *whatever we have done in the Body, whether good or bad*. Of each of these I shall treat in their Order.

I. I would call you to consider the Certainty of this grand event, *we must all appear*. It is the unalterable appointment of God the supreme Governour of the world, founded upon the best reasons; and an appointment which we can by no means set aside. The God ^f in whom we live and move and have our Being, it is plain must know whatever we think or do; for *shall not he that formed the eye see, and he that giveth*
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^e 1 Tim. iv. 1.

^f Acts xvii. 28. Ps. xciv. 9.

man understanding shall not be know? ² The righteous Lord loveth righteousness, and hateth iniquity; and the almighty Creator who spake us into Being, can with equal ease command our bodies from the grave, reunite them to our souls, bring us before his bar, and after a fair trial, reward or punish us in the everlasting state according as we have deserved. We can neither ^h flee from his presence, evade his justice, nor resist his power.

And that *he will* thus bring us into Judgment, he hath *often* and *expressly* assured us in his Word. Nothing can be more plain and determinate than the declaration of the inspired Apostle in the Text, who ⁱ received this great truth from the Judge himself, appearing to him in glory after his Resurrection. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, &c.* Would we have a greater authority for this most interesting truth? We have that of the *Son of God* himself, who having preached the doctrine of a general Resurrection and final Judgment, confirmed it by his testimony when in view of death, that ^k *he would come again in the clouds of heaven, sitting on the right hand of power*; and to place his prediction above all reasonable doubt of its being accomplished, rose again from the dead, and

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² Pl. xi. 7.
Acts xxvi. 13.

^h Pl. cxxxix. 7.

ⁱ Gal. i. 22.

^k Matt. xxvi. 64. Acts i. 9.

in the sight of great numbers ascended on a cloud into heaven, attended by Angels; in like manner as he shall come from thence to judge the World. Hear his plain and express words. ¹ *The hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation.* The same voice, which said with efficacy to the dead, ^m *Lazarus, come forth* of the Tomb, and was immediately obeyed, shall in like manner be obeyed by all the dead, when he shall say, *Awake ye dead, and come to Judgment.* In the 25th Chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, the same divine Person informs us at large of the manner of his coming, and of the proceedings at his Tribunal, and of the sentences of approbation or condemnation which would pass upon many, with the reasons of each, and the full execution of them. Other passages of Scripture, which declare this important Doctrine, are too many to be quoted; and these which I have excised are so express, as to make it unnecessary to mention more by way of proof, to those who believe the Gospel, which teaches it in almost every page. Should any desire further proofs,

¹ John v. 28.

^m John xi. 43.

proofs, they have the * testimony of almost all mankind, who have agreed in the general truth of a future state of Judgment and Retribution, to support which Reason furnishes solid proofs. The History of all nations and all ages informs us, that they have believed a future state of Recompences, though they have mingled many weak and absurd Particulars with the general truth; and the two following Reasons, obvious to all who think, seem to have led them into this belief, or at least to have confirmed them in it.

1. That we are all conscious to ourselves of being *accountable creatures*, by nature *reasonable* and *free*, capable of discerning a moral difference in actions, of chusing good and refusing evil, capable of deserving well or ill, and actually deserving one or the other. God having in the constitution of our nature made us proper subjects of moral government, of which a principle part is the distribution of suitable Rewards or Punishments, it is evident the wisdom visible in our frame will direct him to proceed with us according to the nature he hath given us, and according to our improvement or abuse of our moral powers. Had he designed us to perish like the brutes, without being rewarded or punished at the con-

* — permanere animos arbitramur consensu nationum omnium—Cic. Tusc. Quest. l. 1. §. 16.

conclusion of this state of trial, we should like the brutes have been made without all ability to apprehend God our Maker, and our obligations to him; incable of knowing him, of discerning between moral good and evil, and of acting accordingly, and unapprehensive of a future Judgment. Our natural apprehensions of good or ill desert, our natural hopes and fears of being rewarded or punished, and even our doubts and disputes as to our being related to God as his subjects, and accountable to him, are an evident proof that we are accountable to him; since otherwise like the beasts we should have been intirely free from hopes and fears and inquiries, which no way belong to beings, formed by God not to be the subjects of moral government: whereas by the reasonable nature which God has given him, he plainly tells every man, *Thou art an accountable creature, and shall give an account of thy self unto God.*

We have not a better rule by which to judge with certainty of the *design* of God in any of his works, than the *nature* of these productions, and their manifest *fitness* to answer a certain end. For as a most wise Being certainly knows what he does, he cannot but design the accomplishment of that end, to which, with the most deep and exact contrivance he hath suited the nature and powers of the creature he produces.

Thus

Thus we conclude with certainty and without hesitation, that the Eyes were designed for seeing and the Feet for walking, because all their parts are evidently fitted for these purposes. And with like reason we conclude, that God will call men to account, because men are in every respect formed as accountable creatures should be. All men have an apprehension of a right and wrong in actions, that some actions are to be approved and practised, and render those who practise them deservedly esteemed and beloved by God and men; and that the contrary actions render men justly odious and punishable. They are also conscious to a power of acting one way or another, and of doing oftentimes what they inwardly approve or condemn. For they are also capable of other pleasures and pains, than such as naturally arise from acting well or ill; and are so circumstanced, that by doing what their consciences condemn they may oftentimes gain some sensual pleasure, or serve some worldly interest; or by adhering to the dictates of their consciences lose some present bodily pleasures, or expose themselves to present sensible evils and sufferings. By this situation proper trial is made, whether they will cleave to what is morally good, or forsake it to gain what will gratify their senses or inferior passions. They have also abilities and advantages for
making

making such discoveries of the Perfections and Providence of God, of the obligations of their duty, and of the happiness which will follow the practice of it, as may, if they are considerate and honestly disposed, enable them to triumph over temptations, and adhere to their duty; though not for discerning without uncommon attention such clear and strong and irresistible evidences of these great truths, as shall, by making them as it were to see God present with them, and ready to punish their disobedience, or reward their virtue, in a manner force them to abstain from wickedness, and be obedient unto God. As God therefore has formed mankind, and situated them, exactly as Reason tells us he would do, if he designed this life for a state of trial, and the next of Reward and Punishment, we are warranted with certainty to conclude, that he really tries men in the present state, and will reward or punish them here or hereafter. A wise and good Parent cannot be alike affected to a sober, humane, grateful and obedient Child, and to an intemperate, mischievous, ungrateful and disobedient one; much less can the infinitely wise and righteous Father of mankind be indifferent to the temper and conduct of his reasonable creatures, his offspring, and alike affected towards good and bad. His essential Perfections will determine him to ap-
prove

prove the one, and to condemn the other, and to give proper demonstrations of this in the course of his moral government. But,

2. Men have from long experience observed, that God does not in the *present* state, as a righteous Governour and Judge, make a *constant, visible, and exact* distinction between the good and the bad, in his treatment of them, and therefore with the strongest reason they have concluded, that he will do it in the next. This argument appeared so strong to St. Peter, that as we are informed by * *Clemens Romanus*, it was his usual way of reasoning, *God is just, therefore the soul is immortal*, and will be rewarded or punished in a following state: and in concluding after this manner he has the company of the most celebrated heathen Philosophers, as *Socrates, Plato, Cicero, Plutarch, Hierocles* and others. We must all be as intirely in the hand of God in the next state, as we are in the present; and as there appear wise reasons, why God should bear some time with men, and allow them a proper space for trial, before he fully rewards or punishes them, so as surely as he is wise, and righteous, and almighty, when the time for trial is ended, he will as a good Governour proceed to distribute rewards and punishments with an impartial exactness. What is becoming the
great

* Vide Grot. in Matt. xxii. 32.

great Governour of the world, and what his wise goodness inclines him to do, he will certainly perform; and if he does it not in this state, he will in the next; for he can never leave undone, what it becomes his Perfections to accomplish.

The *good* consequences *naturally* flowing from *Religion* and *Virtue* at present, according to a constitution established by God, show that he approves and delights in the pious and virtuous; and the *evils* and *miseries*, as naturally flowing from *Irreligion* and *Vice* show that these latter are abhorred by him. We cannot *think worthily* of God, and suitably *reverence, love, trust*, be *grateful* to him, and *desirous* to *please* him, but we must enjoy *noble satisfactions* in exercising our best affections on the most grand and lovely object, in the consciousness of being affected towards God as we ought to be, in the more chearful practice of whatever is good animated with the hope of his favour, in a pleasing assurance that all events shall turn out for the best to us, and to all the truly virtuous, under the government of almighty wisdom and unchangeable goodness; and in the largest expectations from this infinitely perfect Being for eternity. On the other hand, *Irreligion* naturally excludes us from all these pleasures, adds strength to every base restless and mischievous passion, takes away the chief encouragements

ments to an amiable virtuous and beneficent temper and conduct, exposes us at every considerate interval to uneasy suspicions, guilty remorse, and foreboding fears of the vengeance of a righteous God, and leaves the mind without all solid support or comfort under calamities, sickness, and the approaches of death ; yea imbitters every affliction with fear and self-condemnation, and more than doubles the gloom of the grave.

Righteousness, Goodness, Mercy, and Fidelity prevailing in our tempers and lives, naturally yield us the satisfactions of gratifying the tender and generous affections of our nature, of receiving the esteem and love and good offices of others, of a just self-approbation, and of a humble assurance of the approbation and friendship of a most righteous and good God ; while *Injustice, Falseness, and Inhumanity* make a person to be hated or despised by all who know him, especially by all who suffer through his injustice ; deprive him of all the pleasures of a just self-approbation, of deserving the esteem and love of his acquaintance, of gratifying the social affections and inclinations, and of being able to hope in God ; and fill him with a most painful mortifying sense of his own baseness, expose him to reproaches and injuries from others, and to the punishment of the Laws, and oftentimes alarm him
with

with fearful expectations of the displeasure and vengeance of a righteous God.

The natural fruits and rewards of *Temperance* and *Chastity* are a healthful body, and a mind clear, vigorous, and active, a freedom from base and restless passions, a quick relish and injoyment of natural and lawful pleasures, a fair reputation, and a constant disposition to enjoy the satisfactions of virtue and piety, and to discharge their duties. On the contrary, a diseased painful body, an uneasy clouded impotent mind, unfit for every nobler action and enjoyment, unsatisfied with itself, despised and condemned by others, and frequently apprehending the displeasure and condemnation of God, especially when the diseases which intemperance and lust have produced, threaten a speedy dissolution of soul and body, and place death in near view, are the present punishments by which a governing God declares his displeasure against these vices, and warns men of full vengeance hereafter. This constitution of nature framed and maintained by God, from which arises happiness to the pious and virtuous, and misery of various kinds to the wicked, declares plainly what God approves and what he condemns; and that notwithstanding the evils which he now for their trial wisely permits to befall the good, and some pleasures and advantages which

which he now for their trial wisely permits to befall the good, and some pleasures and advantages which he suffers the wicked to seize and enjoy, he is not indifferent to virtue or vice: and it as plainly assures us of *future* rewards and punishments, since *accidental* causes, or the *perverse*ness of mankind, do now frequently cross this appointment of God, and prevent an exact adjustment here of happiness to Virtue and Religion, and of misery to Wickedness.

For instance, *false notions* in Religion, or a *melancholy* turn of mind, often deprive the sincerely *pious* throughout life of the natural fruits and rewards of piety; or *persecutions*, raised by proud interested or superstitious men, force the truly religious, even because they are religious, to suffer under oppression, reproaches, losses of estate, imprisonments, tortures and death; while many *impious* persons, through the advantage of a temper naturally chearful, an healthful constitution, and an affluent fortune, pass life in a variety of pleasures, amidst which they hide themselves from the accusations of their own minds, and from the terrors of a future reckoning; 'till at length, hardened by wickedness and prosperity, ⁿ they *die thoughtless and secure*. *Fraud* and *oppression* deprive the *righteous* frequently of the fruits of their integrity and diligence, or the *vices* and *miseries* of those, who by nature or relation

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are

* See Psal. lxxiii. 3—9. and Job xxi. 7—13.

are dear to them, make their tender humanity and compassionateness of disposition their torment ; while *wicked* men by artful dissimulation, and humouring the follies and vices of others, often make their fortunes, and steal that affection and those advantages which belong to honesty and goodness ; and by joining in the violences of the stronger party secure their ill acquired possessions, and triumph in the spoils of the upright and benevolent. A *sickly constitution* of body very often deprives temperate persons of that health and vigour, which according to the general laws of the animal frame are the proper rewards of temperance ; while many intemperate persons, through the natural strength of their constitutions, shall during a great part of life keep clear of the pains and sicknesses which the others feel. And finally, a *natural temperament* or *circumstances* in life unfavourable to piety and virtue, though where they are surmounted they heighten the worth and rewardableness of those who surmount such disadvantages, yet they very much lessen the present satisfactions of a virtuous conduct ; and the struggle continuing perhaps throughout life, deprives them of a great part of the satisfactions which belong to a sincere piety and virtue, and which a less degree of those dispositions in a more advantageous situation would have yielded.

Through

Through these and various other causes, too many to be assigned at present, the religious and good suffer many evils, which according to the original appointment of God do not belong to them; and are deprived of many satisfactions which are their right; and the wicked escape many evils which they deserve, and enjoy pleasures of which they are unworthy: so that it may be questioned, whether many wicked men, through the advantages of natural Temper, Constitution, Fortune, and the like, are not at present happier than many sincerely, tho' imperfectly good men. And it is evident upon the whole, that the present distribution of good and happiness is far from being in *exact* proportion to moral worth; or the distribution of evil to real vice. Upon supposition of a future state of recompences, this is wisely permitted by God during a state of trial, and is a noble and the principal trial of genuine virtue and piety; but upon no other supposition can the permission of such an inequality be reconciled with the infinite wisdom, power, righteousness, and goodness of a governing God. Since therefore the essential wisdom, justice, and goodness of God assure us, that with regard to his rational and free creatures he must will, that the *best* should upon the whole be *happiest*, and the *worst* the *most wretched*; and since in the present constitution of things,

by the natural fruits of piety and virtue he hath shown his approbation of these dispositions, and by the natural fruits of impiety and wickedness his dislike of these; and yet thro' the intervention of some other causes, what he approves and wills should take place, very often does not take place in the *present* life; there must therefore be another state for men, and a final Judgment, by which happiness or misery will be distributed to mankind in exact proportion to their moral characters. It is not then more certain that the God who governs the World is most wise and righteous, than that he will judge men after death.

This reasoning from the *promiscuous* distribution of good and evil at present, compared with the allowed perfections of the great Governour of the world, in proof of a future state of retribution, has carried conviction with it to the honest and considerate in all ages; and when improved and confirmed by express revelation from God, must place this great truth beyond all rational doubt with us christians; who by the Gospel also are taught to form the most worthy notions of the wisdom, holiness, and righteousness of God, and who have the great doctrine of a future Judgment represented in the New Testament in a most clear and rational manner, and confirmed by the dying Testimony, and glorious Resurrection

urrection of the Son of God, who declared himself to be appointed by his Father the Judge of *the quick and the dead*.

It is needless therefore to enlarge on this first head, to prove the *Certainty* of this awful and important event; and I shall close this Discourse with this Application of it, the requesting every one seriously to ask himself.—“ Since it is most certain that
 “ I myself must soon be judged, what would
 “ be my doom, if I was *immediately* summoned to the Bar of the Son of God?
 “ Are my temper and conduct such as
 “ would procure me approbation or condemnation; a sentence to misery, or to
 “ happiness everlasting? Am I devout towards God as I ought to be? Or have
 “ I lived negligent of secret sincere devotion, for the main regardless of God, unthankful for his benefits, and unconcerned to please him, and thus exposed myself to condemnation from that Jesus, who has commanded me to ° *enter into my Closet, and pray to my Father who seeth in secret; to give thanks for all things in his name, and to walk with God?* Do
 “ I temperately and thankfully use the bounties of heaven? Or am I under the guilt
 “ of intemperately and ungratefully abusing the gifts of God, and under the con-
 F 3 “ demnation

° Matt. vi. 6. Ephes. v. 20. Heb. xi. 5.

“ demnation which the ^p Gospel of Christ
 “ denounces against the *drunkard*, the *un-*
 “ *clean*, the *luxurious* and *sensual*? Is my
 “ conversation governed by the rules of
 “ *truth*, *righteousness*, and *humanity*, pre-
 “ scribed by my Judge; and do I treat
 “ others as I with reason expect they should
 “ treat me? Or am I open to the sentence
 “ which will be past on the ^r *liar*, the
 “ *slanderer*, the *unjust*, the *unmerciful*, and
 “ *oppressive*? Do I live as an expectant of a
 “ future Judgment; or forgetful of it?
 “ Whether I think of it or not, I must be
 “ judged——by forgetting it I am sure to
 “ be condemned. I will therefore examine
 “ my temper and actions with strictness
 “ and impartiality, as one who knows I
 “ must soon undergo the strictest examina-
 “ tion of the great Lawgiver. I will with-
 “ out a moment’s delay break of all those
 “ practices and indulgences, which he in-
 “ forms me will subject me to this sen-
 “ tence, ^t *Depart accursed into everlasting*
 “ *fire*. I will immediately engage myself in
 “ that course of secret devotion and habi-
 “ tual piety, and cultivate that pure, tem-
 “ perate, righteous, benevolent, and mer-
 “ ciful disposition and character, which ac-
 “ cording

^p Matt. xxiv. 49. Heb. xiii. 4. Luke xvii. 19.
 Phil. iii. 19. ^q Eph. iv. 25. Matt. v. 7. vii. 12.
^r Rev. xxi. 8. 1 Cor. vi. 9. Gal. v. 19. ^t Matt.
 xxv. 34—46.

“ cording to the exprefs declarations of the
“ Gospel, will caufe me to hear from my
“ Judge, *Come thou blessed of my Father, in-*
“ *herit the kingdom prepared for thee.*
“ Knowing that I muſt certainly be judged,
“ I ſhall be the moſt ſtupid, guilty, and
“ wretched of creatures if I do not —
“ And as it is not more certain, that I now
“ live a reasonable creature, than that I
“ muſt be judged, I will live under the
“ influence of this truth, and never more
“ think, or ſay, or do any thing, which
“ would occaſion my being condemned by
“ the righteous Judge of the World. The
“ Gospel of Chriſt ſhall be my rule of liv-
“ ing, as I deſire to have the happineſs it
“ promiſes my everlaſting portion”.

We ſhall be more ſtrongly determined
thus to act, if we ſeriously conſider,

II. The *Perſon* who will be our Judge,
viz. the *Lord Jeſus Chriſt*; and this I ſhall
aſſiſt you to do in the next Diſcourſe.

According to the express declaration of the
Scripture, will come into his hands, from my
mouth, Come that blessed of my Father, in-
herit the Kingdom prepared for thee.
Knowing that I must certainly be judged,
I shall be the most stupid, foolish, and
unprofitable of creatures if I do not
know as it is not more certain, that I now
am a miserable creature, than that I
am a sinner, I will live under the
conviction of this truth, and never more
be able to say, or do any thing, which
will diminish my being condemned by
the righteous Judge of the World. The
thought of this shall be the rule of my
life, I desire to have no happiness if
it does not consist in my everlasting portion.
I shall, in all things, be governed
by the word of God, and his Spirit.

If the Lord who will be my Judge,
shall say, that I am his, and I shall
be his to all eternity.

AMEN



S E R M O N IV.

Of the Person by whom the World
will be judged.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



THESE words offer to our thoughts several important truths relating to a future Judgment; as the Certainty of this grand event, *we must all appear, &c.* the Person who will be our Judge, *before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; the Manner of our trial, as most public and equitable, *we must all appear, that every one may receive according to that he hath done*; the Persons to be tried, *all must appear*; and finally,

finally, the *Actions* for which we are to be accountable, the *things done in the Body*, whether good or bad. The first of these truths, the *Certainty* of a future general Judgment, I represented and proved in the preceding Discourse, I am now,

II. To treat of the *Person* who will be our Judge. The Apostle in the Text assures us, the *Lord Jesus Christ* is appointed to this high office. *We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ.* The ^a *only begotten of the Father*, the *Word who was in the beginning* with the most high God and Father of all, and was himself a *God*, and who afterwards was *made Flesh and tabernacled among us*, is the Person whom his God and Father hath with great wisdom and goodness constituted universal Judge, ^b *committing to him all Judgment.* The *immense extent* of his knowledge, wisdom and power, as he is God's ^c *own Son*, peculiarly qualify him for so great a work, to know all hearts, and with exact justice determine the merits, and dispose the fates of all mankind. And his *experimental knowledge* of our weakness and frailty, having been *made Flesh*, and ^d *in all things tempted like as we are*, qualifies him to make all those allowances to us, which are necessary on account of the infirmities of our moral constitution, and the numerous
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^a John i. 1, 14.
viii. 32.

^b John v. 22.
^d Hebr. ii. 17, 18. iv. 15.

^c Rom.

and powerful temptations which surround us. The wisdom and goodness of God are therefore evident in appointing, that his Son whose concern for promoting his Father's honour, in restoring and advancing the holiness and happiness of mankind, determined him to leave his *Father's bosom*, and *put off the glory he had with him before the world was*; who did not covet to appear upon Earth like a God, but took on him the form of a *Servant*——who to restore mankind to the knowledge, resemblance, and love of the supreme Being, and to a meekness for everlasting felicity in his presence, was content to be born of a poor Virgin in want and obscurity; who that he might recommend true piety and goodness in the most ingaging manner, and at the same time mortify us to external pomp and grandeur, and sensual pleasures, the desire of which has so often proved fatal to human virtue, appeared destitute of all these; lived on earth poor, despised, afflicted, yet lived chearfully resigned and devoted to the will of God, zealous and active in performing the work assigned him, and unwearied in promoting the happiness even of the ungrateful creatures who persecuted him——there is evident wisdom and goodness in appointing, that this same Jesus should possess the supreme dignity of universal Judge.

This

† John i. 18. xvii. 5. Philip. ii. 6, 7.

This *Jesus* shall judge the World, who delivered to us those excellent Doctrines and Precepts, by the belief and obedience of which our souls are purified, the dominion of our lusts broken, and we excited and inabled to *perfect holiness in the fear of God*, and thus prepared to be perfectly happy in heaven. — This *Jesus* who after he had lived a while on earth, distributing temporal and spiritual blessings to mankind, confirming his Doctrine by abundant miracles, recommending his divine Precepts by his own observance of them, instructing his Apostles, and fitting them to spread the Gospel of Salvation through the World, then laid down his life to ratify the truths he had taught, to teach his followers to sacrifice every thing, even life itself, when the cause of true Religion required it, and by his obedience unto death to regain for mankind their forfeited immortality. — This same *Jesus* who after he had lain so long in the grave, as was necessary to assure the certainty of his death, did on the third day rise again, abundantly manifesting the truth of his Religion, and his full acceptance with God, establishing our faith, and encouraging our hopes of a resurrection and a glorious immortality; and who ascended into heaven on a cloud with a train of Angels in the view of his disciples, and now sits *at the right hand of God making intercession for us*, and directing

ing all the affairs of the World for the good of his Church; this same *Jesus* whom his Apostle assure us, [†] *they saw thus go up into heaven, shall come in like manner from heaven to judge the World.* [‡] *The Son of Man* (these are his own words) *shall come in his glory, and all his holy Angels with him; then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as a Shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.*

That God will judge the World by *Jesus Christ* is so manifest a doctrine of the Gospel, and taught so often and expressly in it, that it is needless to cite more Scriptures in confirmation of it; and I cannot remember to have read or heard of any who profess Christianity, that ever disputed this truth; tho' some or other have rejected most of the other Doctrines of Revelation. As we all therefore profess with an intire assent to receive this important truth, let us be persuaded so to reflect upon it, as to give it a proper influence on our temper, and bring our conduct under the regulation of it; that we may thus secure the approbation of this great Judge, which is of greater importance to our happiness than the whole World, than a thousand Worlds.

The following important *Reflections* here offer themselves to our serious thoughts.

I. Is

[†] Acts i. 11.

[‡] Matt. xxv. 31.

1. Is the *Son of God incarnate* appointed to be our *Judge*, how great is the *wisdom* of God conspicuous in this appointment, and how *equal* our Lord to the great office assigned him! Had *God the Father* judged us *immediately*, though his infinite wisdom, power, holiness, and goodness would naturally strike us with the greatest awe of this Judgment, and assure us that no sin could escape his observation and displeasure, and that nothing but substantial goodness and piety could commend us to his approbation; and though from his unbounded wisdom and goodness we might depend on all the condescension and allowances to our frailty we could reasonably desire, yet we should after all have been apt secretly to fear, that as God is infinitely exalted above us, and incapable of *feeling* the difficulties, temptations, and evils with which we struggle, so he might not make such large allowances for them as we should need, in order to our being acquitted at his Tribunal. For if God be ^h *strict to mark iniquity*, who could stand? The * *beaten* therefore in their accounts of the Judgment which they imagined would pass upon men after death, represented as Judges some of their fellows, who had lived upon earth, but been exemplary just and religious. But *mere men* are
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^h Pf. cxxx. 3.
et *Platon: Gorgians.*

* Vid. Virgil: *Æneid: L. 6.*

no way equal to this great work. They have neither an *extent* nor *justness* of understanding sufficient to comprehend and measure the several relations and circumstances of human actions, and the exact degrees of good or evil in each; they cannot receive the knowledge of every one's temper and conduct, they are liable to be influenced by *partial* affections, and they want power to ratify their judgments. All these defects are supplied, and all the advantages we could wish, in regard of equity, mildness, condescension, are secured to us by God's constituting his own incarnate Son our Judge, and infinitely more love, since our Judge submitted to be born and die to promote our eternal salvation. How could God more strongly assure us of the equity of his proceedings, of his unbounded goodness and tender compassion, of his unalterable concern for the happiness of his creatures, and his gracious purpose to crown all with immortal life and happiness, who do not render themselves utterly incapable and unworthy of life eternal? At the same time what better method could have been taken, to prevent sinners from flattering themselves with hopes of impunity in sin, since their Judge is the Son of God, ⁱ *his express Image*, exactly resembling him in his perfections, especially in his wisdom and holiness? Must
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ⁱ Hebr. i. 3.

not every reasonable person own, that the more seriously he contemplates, and the more thoroughly he understands the christian scheme, the more worthy of God it appears, and the more fit every way to advance the interests of virtue and piety amongst mankind? Could God in any way conceivable have rendered the last Judgment, at the same time more awful to all men, and more encouraging to sincere and honest minds, than by raising his own Son to the Seat of Judgment? God will overbear none by his infinite majesty and power, for he will judge us by a *Man* like ourselves; and none who are wicked and obstinate can escape, for the *Son of Man* is also the *Son of God*.

2. Is all the World to be judged by Christ, what a *mighty authority* does this give to his *Word* and *Laws*; how intirely should we reverence, study, and practise them; and how dreadful will be the state of those, who reject and disobey them! If an earthly Prince had given us Laws, on observing which all our interests in this World depended, a Prince who was both able and disposed to reward our obedience with the greatest wealth and honour, or to punish our disobedience with certain death and infamy; if he had given us all imaginable assurance, that he would strictly attend to the full execution of his Laws, and not regard his crown or his life equally with it; and if his power

to reward or punish were beyond question, and we continually under his observation, is it possible we should think any affair of this life worthy our concern, in comparison with our knowing and obeying his laws? Could we neglect them for any trifling amusement or pursuit; or content ourselves barely with inquiring into the meaning of the laws, or criticising the air and expression of the person who delivered the commands to us? And how is it, my Friends, that we pay no more serious regard to the laws of the Son of God; which are not merely the counsels of a wise and good man our friend, that have nothing but their reasonableness and goodness to recommend them to our observance, but are the counsels and laws of the Son of God, of one who has ^k *all power in heaven and earth given to him*; and who will certainly call us to an account as to our observing or neglecting them, and distribute suitable rewards or punishments, the eternal recompences he hath annexed to them? He cannot be a little concerned, whether we obey or reject what he became incarnate, lived upon earth in an afflicted and persecuted condition, and at last died to recommend more effectually to our esteem and obedience.

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“ Is

* Matt. xxviii. 18.

“ Is not, O my Soul, all this true?
 “ Must I be shortly called to an account
 “ by the Son of God, and examined how
 “ far I have conformed to his precepts?
 “ Am I assured not only from the excel-
 “ lence of his commands, but from his
 “ being *made flesh* and *dying*, how dear to
 “ him an obedience to them must be, and
 “ how offensive disobedience? And hath
 “ this ¹ *Lawgiver* a power to *save* or to
 “ *destroy*, to make happy forever, or to
 “ *punish with everlasting destruction*; and is
 “ it a matter of small consequence to me,
 “ which of these he will do with regard
 “ to me? Whence is it that I read on
 “ hear his Word with no more seriousness
 “ and attention, and that I govern my
 “ temper and conduct no more by it?
 “ Whence is it that I am so careless in ex-
 “ amining by it my title to his favour,
 “ and to life eternal; am so much influ-
 “ enced by the esteem or opinion of others
 “ when I am only to be judged by the
 “ Son of God; the same Divine Person
 “ whose Gospel ^m *teaches me, denying all*
 “ *ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live sober*
 “ *ly, righteously, and godly, in the present world*
 “ *looking for the blessed hope, and the glori-*
 “ *ous appearing of the great God and our*
 “ *Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself*
 “ *for*

¹ James iv. 12. 2 Thess. i. 9. ^m Tit ii. 12—14

"for us, that he might redeem us from all
"iniquity, and purify unto himself a pecu-
"liar people, zealous of good works? I will
"therefore for the future read and hear
"the Word of God with diligence and at-
"tention ; I will carefully learn, and faith-
"fully practise his Will ; since he who now
"instructs me by his Word, and by his
"Ministers, will shortly judge me by his
"Son."

And then, what just terrour does this doctrine speak to all who reject the Gospel of Christ, after they have had sufficient means for knowing its truth and excellence ! It is not an error barely as to a point of history and curious speculation, not to believe that Christ was sent by God, and to refuse submission to his divine authority ; but it is opposing, through the influence of some criminal prejudice or corrupt passion, a design which brought the Son of God from heaven, reconciled him to a mortal life, and to the death of the Cross. It is in effect *"crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open shame,* declaring that he suffered deservedly as an Impostor, counting the blood of the Covenant with which they might have been cleansed an *unholy thing,* and doing despite to the Spirit of Grace. Great as was the condescension and love of the Son of God in becoming in-

G 2

carnate,

^a Heb. vi. 6.

carnate, and submitting to death, for the instruction and reformation of mankind; and great as was the love of God in giving up his own Son to death for the salvation of the world, so great must be the concern of Christ and of his Father, for advancing this design, and their displeasure against those who wilfully reject the Gospel. And how will they bear to appear before him, who have on them this guilt, of frustrating in themselves, and as far as they could in others, the end of all his love, and of this infinite expence; which they have, who reject the Gospel of Christ, after it has been proposed to them with sufficient evidence, and who seduce others into infidelity! They who are inclined to reject Christianity should with care examine their own breasts and see, whether a latent pride, some favourite lust, or some worldly profits inconsistent with the Gospel, be not the true cause of their unbelief, and not a want of reasonable evidence; whether one or all of these have not excited them to hunt for objections against Christianity, and to pass slightly over and disregard its glorious proofs. For what will it signify to pretend, that their unbelief is owing to a deficiency of evidence, not to their neglecting sincerely and impartially to inquire, or to the unreasonableness of some doctrines which they think to be christian, if these
are

are not the real causes. Our wishes or mistakes, or most confident assertions, cannot change the real truth of the case, or divest Jesus Christ of the dignity of Son of God, and Judge of the World, if he be really his Son, and appointed by him to be Judge. And as the Son of God, he ^o *knows all hearts, and is a searcher and discerners of the thoughts*, sees through all disguises and pretences, and will punish a criminal disbelief with a punishment proportioned to the evidences of his Religion, the excellence of it, and of that design which these scoffers oppose; and to the greatness of that felicity for which they disqualify themselves and others. Infidelity is the growing corruption of our times, let us therefore ^p *take heed lest we fall after this example of unbelief. For the word or Son of God is a discerners of the thoughts of the heart; and all things are naked and open to the eyes of him, to whom we are to give an account.*

And this doctrine speaks equal or greater terrour to all *wicked christians*. It seems of the two less criminal not to obey one whose authority we really, though faultily, disbelieve and reject, than when we pretend to own his authority and our obligations to him, to trifle with him in the most notorious manner, neglect his commands.

G 3

^o Revel. ii. 23. Heb. iv. 12. ^p Heb. iv. 13.

mands, and ingage in practices directly opposite to the ends of his incarnation and death. "Blessed Lord, how will wicked professors of thy Religion abide thine appearance, the drunkard, the unclean, the ungodly, the covetous, the unjust, the envious, the malicious, and unforgiving, who in words own thee, but in works deny thee!" Unhappy Creatures! How will you answer such questions as these to your Judge, or to your own consciences? Did you not profess to believe that I was the Son of God, that I came from heaven to give you laws, to warn you to flee from the wrath to come, and to secure life eternal; that I redeemed you with my blood, and would judge you according to your works, and certainly execute my sentence? Could any words be more express than my laws were against those vices which you have practised? Did I not assure you, *not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father?* And by my Apostles inform you, that *without holiness no man shall see the Lord; that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards,*

ards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God; and yet one or other of these was your character through life? Did you not persist in it against the instructions of my *Word*, the reproofs of my *Ministers*, the motives of my *Gospel*, the obligations of my *Death*, and the strivings of my *Spirit*? Did you not continue to prefer your corrupt pleasures or profits, before complying with my reasonable demands, and answering the purposes of my dying, even while you profest to believe that I was the Son of God, and that I died for your salvation, and to mortify you to all sin? *'Depart from me, I know you not, though you have been called by my name, and have eaten and drunk in my presence; I know you not, ye have been workers of iniquity.'*

Can you according to the tenour of the Gospel expect any other sentence from the Son of God? Can you hope he will deny himself, and go contrary to the ends of his death? Or can you be easy while you have no security from hell, but such ungrounded expectations? Who of you, if guilty of a capital crime, would not dread being tried for his life by a Judge, whom he had affronted and injured in the greatest degree? And can you be easy to think that your state for eternity will be deter-

G 4

mined

mined by an impartial Judge, whom you have provoked by the most notorious guilt and ingratitude, and whose mercy was your only refuge from deserved damnation? Will you not endeavour in time to be reconciled to him by your repentance, submission, and faithful obedience? Resolve therefore that you will no longer read or hear his Word, as a matter of form, of amusement or speculation; but that you will regard and obey his instructions as for your lives, as persons who know he will be your Judge. Your attending constantly and with external reverence the Institutions of his Religion, your professing yourselves his disciples, and communicating in his Ordinances, if not productive of the proper fruits of piety and obedience, instead of being your defence, will aggravate your condemnation. It will prove far more tolerable in the day of Judgment, to have been *wicked beatbens* than *wicked christians*.

3. Shall we be judged at last by the Son of God, how much are we concerned to imitate the example which he set us while upon earth, if we would be approved by him at the great day! He must certainly have it at heart that we conform to his example, when he descended from heaven, and was *made flesh*, in order to give us an imitable and perfect pattern of all goodness

ness and piety ; and if he approve himself and his own conduct, he cannot approve us at last unless we resemble him. Let all who profess themselves his disciples and friends think seriously of this. Did the Son of God give me an example of the most constant and exalted piety, steady regard to the supreme Being, resignation to his Will, frequent retirement and warm devotion ; did he spend whole nights in prayer, when doing good filled the day ; and all this to instruct me to cultivate the love of God ? How shall I stand before him at last, if I live as without God in the world ? If I seldom or never pray in secret, if my devotions are formal and lifeless, and if instead of maintaining a sense of God amidst the pleasures and cares of the world, I plunge into these, so as almost intirely to forget God ; if instead of being resigned to his Will, and patient under his appointments, I seldom regard his Providence, or refuse to submit to the circumstances wherein he places me, and to discharge the proper duties, endeavouring to free myself from them by forbidden methods ? Did the Son of God give me the pattern of the warmest love to mankind, and the most active benevolence ; did he [†] *go about doing good* to the bodies and souls of men, and neglect all other concerns in comparison of this ?

† Acts x. 38.

this? How shall I appear before him, how hope for his approbation, and how avoid being condemned, if I wholly disregard his example herein; if I am intirely devoted to my own little interests, seldom or never do any good to others, by relieving the necessitous, comforting the afflicted, or instructing the ignorant? Was a generous love to mankind an excellence in our Saviour, and must not the contrary temper of malice, uncharitableness, or sordid selfishness, render me very offensive to him? Must he not condemn me, unless I could hope, that our Lord to acquit me, will condemn himself? Was the Son of God meek and patient under injuries, temperate in the use of bodily pleasures, always preferring the satisfactions of goodness and devotion? And am I fierce, revengeful, intemperate, and wholly devoted to the pleasures of the body? If in my measure I resembled him, I might be sure of his approbation; and the nearer I resembled him, the more exalted would be my glory and happiness.

“ While others therefore propound to
 “ themselves other patterns, *follow a mul-*
 “ *titude to do evil*, or are determined by
 “ the practice of the great and rich and
 “ worldly wise, thy life O *Jesus* shall be
 “ my pattern! It is in itself the most ex-
 “ cellent, and will soon be the standard
 “ by which all others shall be tried. May
 “ I pray

“ I pray and praise and meditate ; may I
“ love and serve God, and do good to
“ men, in a manner some way worthy of
“ thy example, that I may be thought
“ worthy of the honour of being owned
“ by thee at the great Judgment day !”

4. What great encouragement does this yield to all sincere christians, amidst their many imperfections, difficulties, and temptations, that they shall be judged by the *Son of God*, who was also the *Son of Man*. Are your trials severe, are your inclinations to some vice, arising from your peculiar constitution, strong ? Is your virtue imperfect ; do you come very short of that intense love and devotedness to the Redeemer which you would fain reach ; do you strive hard against the influence of a tempting world, of bad examples, and the like ; which after all render your love to God and to Jesus less fervent, and your obedience less uniform than your desire ? Upon a serious review of your religious duties and virtues are you deeply humbled for your defects ; and do you tremble when you think of the scrutiny of the last day, of appearing before a *“ God who is greater than your hearts, and who knoweth all things, and who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation ? Be not dejected, “ like as a Father pitieth his Children, so the Lord pitieth*

pitieth them that fear him ; he knoweth our frame, he remembreth that we are dust. You will not appear before the bar of a Judge, who seeks to condemn you, and will ^{*} *be strict to mark iniquity* ; but your Judge is your Friend, ^y *he loved you and died for you.* He *partook of flesh and blood*, lived amidst infirmities, temptations, and sufferings, that he might experimentally know your state, and make every favourable allowance for it. Can you doubt of his approbation and love to the penitent, the sincere, the truly though imperfectly obedient, when he died to save even the guilty world ? He did not give laws on purpose to insnare his subjects, nor place us on our probation in order to our falling into misery, but that we might approve ourselves to be finally happy. He requires indeed that we should labour after ^z *perfection*, because the *better* we are the *more happy* we shall be ; but he will not ^a *despise sincerity*. His perfect holiness is tempered with equal love, and softened by all the tenderness and compassion of the human nature, of the most affectionate ^a *Brother*, of the most indulgent *Parent*. To continued idleness, unfaithfulness, wilful disobedience, ingratitude and hypocrisy, he cannot be reconciled ;

^{*} Psal. cxxx. 3.

^y Rev. i. 5.

Heb. ii. 14.—18.

^z Mat. v. 48.

² Cor. vii. 1.

^a Mat. xii. 20.

Heb. ii. 11.

ciled; but the pious, the ^b *bumble*, the *penitent mourner*, and the soul *that hungers and thirsts after righteousness*, and longs to be perfectly like him, he will satisfy, own, and reward; and measure our love and our virtue by the difficulties which we surmounted, and by the temptations which we struggled with and overcame. How may we rejoice to think of such a Judge, who put the most favourable construction on the crime of his murderers, and prayed to his Father to forgive them, pleading for them that ^c *they knew not what they did*; who with so much gentleness and patience bore the dulness, prejudices and faults of his Apostles, while he conversed with them; excused their ^d *sleeping* during his *Agony*, and forgave their *deserting* him when he was apprehended; and who endured the pain of the Cross, and was *in all things tempted like unto us*, though still *without sin*! Whatever condescensions and allowances can be expected from the most perfect goodness, and are reconcileable with an equal love of virtue and piety, and a warm concern for our true perfection and happiness, you may expect from him; and who can desire any other? “I will endeavour to need no other, and since my Redeemer to whom I owe a most perfect

^b Matt. v. 3, 4, 6. ^c Luke xxiii. 34. ^d Matt. xxvi. 32, 41. Luke xxii. 31, 32.

“fect love, and most zealous and constant
 “obedience, will not despise the day of
 “small things, I will labour to be intire-
 “ly his.”

5. How great will be the glory, happiness, and reward of the Saints, when they shall be judged and rewarded by the Son of God, who lived upon earth, and died on a cross to advance their happiness, and who hath ^e*all power in heaven and earth* in his hands! The greatness of this reward will be determined, not by the meanness of our virtue and obedience, but by the infinite benignity of that God ^f*who gave his own Son* to death for us, and by the greatness of his love who is the dispenser of it. Who can comprehend the greatness of that goodness, friendship, and condescension, which brought him from heaven down to our sinful world, reconciled him to lead the life of a poor mortal, subject to all the inconveniences of our condition, to persecutions, and at last to death! Is not the love herein manifested above our apprehensions, and above comparison great? Great then, above all our present apprehensions and comparisons, must be the glory and blessedness which he will confer on his redeemed and approved. Judge not therefore christian of thy future happiness by the shortness

^e Matt. xxviii. 18. John xiv 1, 2. ^f Rom. viii. 32.

ness of thy time of trial, by the imperfection of thy goodness, of thy gratitude and love, but judge of it by the greatness of thy Saviour's condescension in leaving heaven for thee, by the tenderness and generosity of his dying love. It is true we shall be rewarded ^z *according to our works*; in proportion as our obedience has been more intire, our happiness will be more abundant; but then, the lowest degree of happiness enjoyed to eternity will be infinitely above the obedience of the best. For ^b *he that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood*, it is he that rewards us, and *makes us Kings and Priests unto God*. The God who *bath given us his own Son*, and subjected him to death, that he might be compleatly our Saviour, and who appoints him to distribute his favours, and to be our Judge, will with him give us all things; as great a happiness as our capacities will admit. As much therefore as eternity exceeds time, as much as the dignity of the Son of God exceeds that of any earthly Monarch, and as much as his dying love exceeds the affection of any Prince to his subjects, so much will the reward and happiness conferred by the Son of God at the last day, exceed all the happiness and glory of the present life; for ⁱ *eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor hath it entered*

^z Rom. ii. 6. ^b Rev. i. 5, 6. ⁱ 1 Cor. ii. 9.

tered into the heart of man to conceive the things, which God hath prepared for them that love him, and which the Son of God will give to those whom he loved to the death. To conclude.

6. How righteous, how terrible, and how remediless, will the condemnation and misery of the wicked be, when they shall receive their sentence from the Son of God! To what tribunal can they appeal in hope of a more favourable sentence, when condemned by the Son of God, the *Mediator between God and Man*, by him who was made flesh and died that he might save them? Can they expect to be acquitted or forgiven by God, when his Son in his name shall sentence them to eternal destruction? And how justly will he condemn them! He conversed on earth that he might know the difficulties in our way to virtue and happiness, and suit his laws, his motives, and assistances to them, and make every reasonable and gracious allowance at last; after all this he condemns them; and if their condemnation proceed from such a Judge, how just must we conclude it to be! His example showed them, that piety and virtue were not only most lovely in their greatest degrees, but practicable; he directed and excited them by his instructions and example, ^k *offered them the assistance of his Spirit,*

^k Luke xi. 13. Rev. iii. 21.

Spirit, and encouraged them by the promise of a *reward* of the same kind with his own. Could he do more for the salvation of reasonable and free creatures, than live on earth, and try the world in person, that he might adapt his Religion to their weaknesses and wants, and at last die to reconcile them fully unto God, and¹ open the way for the most liberal *communications of his Spirit*? Could more powerful motives have been revealed, than he hath revealed? Could he lay men under greater obligations of gratitude or interest? Surely if they had acted so, that their salvation would be any way consistent with the honour of God's perfections and government, Jesus would have saved them. But all wicked christians will be condemned by him; they must therefore certainly perish, except they now repent. Who shall plead with God for you, when the^m *one Mediator between God and man* cuts you off? Who shall deliver you when theⁿ *Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the World*, shall change his meekness and love for a just indignation, and appears as the *Lion of the Tribe of Judah* to tear you in pieces? How intolerable will be the thought, that you are doomed to *misery* by the Son of God, who died to have saved you, but you would not comply with his offers, and be saved by him! You must see it to be
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¹ Gal. iii. 13, 14.

² 1 Tim. ii. 5.

ⁿ John i. 29. Rev. v. 5.

wholly your own fault that you are miserable ; and how much more miserable will this reflection make you, that you were so obstinately bent on your own ruin, and were even greater enemies to yourselves, than the Saviour of the world could be a friend ? “ O
 “ my Redeemer, whoever condemns or
 “ casts me off, let me not be condemned and
 “ cast off by thee ! I can bear the scorn and
 “ censures of men, their hatred or fury ; I
 “ can impute these to a want of knowledge,
 “ of justice, or goodness, but if thou con-
 “ demnest me I must be guilty, if thou
 “ shouldst cast me off I must be utterly
 “ wretched. There is no goodness, no con-
 “ descension, no compassion like thine. I
 “ will therefore now avoid with the utmost
 “ care whatever thy Word condemns. I
 “ will immediately reform all those vices,
 “ which thy Gospel has marked for damna-
 “ tion ; and exercise myself in all those vir-
 “ tues which thou hast so strongly recom-
 “ mended. I will not neglect this present
 “ time, *this day of salvation*, since it will
 “ be in vain to wish or hope for any other.
 “ If my guilt be not now purged by repen-
 “ tance, thro’ thy death, there will ° remain
 “ no other sacrifice for sin, but a certain
 “ fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery
 “ indignation, which shall devour thine ad-
 “ versaries.”

May

° Hebr. x. 26, 27.

the World will be judged. 115

May God our heavenly Father grant therefore, that what has been now represented to our consideration may determine us all immediately to fly from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. Amen.

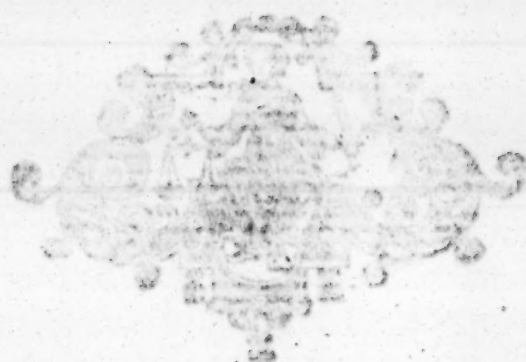


H 2

S E R.

the Word will be judged. 115

May God our heavenly Father grant
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S E R M O N V.

Of the Manner of proceeding at the
last Judgment.

2. COR. V. 10.

*For we must all appear before the Judgment
Seat of Christ, that every one may receive
the things done in his Body, according to that
he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*



THIS Text, I observed, contains several important truths relating to the last Judgment, which I have undertaken to treat distinctly; the *Certainty* of it, *we must all appear*; the *Person* who will be our Judge, *before the Judgment Seat of Christ*; the *Manner* of our trial, as most publick and equitable, *we must all appear, that every one may receive according to that he hath done*; the *Persons* to be then tried, all

must appear; and finally, the *Actions* for which we are to be accountable, the *things done in the Body, whether good or bad*. I have treated the two first of these points, the *Certainty* of this universal Judgment, and of the *Fitness* of our *Lord Christ* to support this great character of universal Judge. My method now leads me,

III. To give you the Scripture account of the *Manner* of this great transaction, which will be most *publick*, and *equitable*, and it's equity acknowledged by all.

I. The transactions of the last Judgment shall be most *publick*, and it shall appear to the conviction of all, that there is a *God who judgeth* the children of men by his Son. The Judge shall be seated on a high and dazzling throne, surrounded with a visible glory and majesty, and cloathed with a human body: the body in which he lived on earth was persecuted, sentenced, scourged, and crucified, but adorned now with a radiance and beauty equal to his former deep abasement, and undeserved disgrace. ^a *Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth wail because of him; even so, Amen.* He shall come with a glory far superior to that in which he appeared to this Apostle, *cloathed with a bright garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*

^a Rev. i. 7, 13, 14, 15.

girdle. His head and his hairs white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass burning in a furnace; his voice as the sound of many waters; and his countenance as the sun shining in his strength. Our Apostle in another place thus represents this grand and publick transaction, as he saw it in a vision. ^b *I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it; from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the Books were opened, and another Book was opened which is the Book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the Books, according to their works.* Both Saints and Sinners you see shall appear before his grand Tribunal; and the transactions be publick before the whole collection of mankind, of *Angels*, and of *Devils*. God now in the dispensations of his Providence often rewards or punishes men in a *real* tho' *secret* manner. The present inward satisfactions of goodness and piety, a strong sense of his favour, success to their good designs, deliverance from evils, and the like, are the rewards which God now frequently confers on the good. On the other hand, secret shame, remorse, disappointments, diseases, punishments from men, infamy and death, are often dispensed to the wicked here by a righteous Providence: but this is not

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done

done so stately and universally, as to manifest to the full conviction of all the love which God bears to virtue and piety, and his abhorrence of wickedness. Yea, it is a frequent ^c *complaint* of good men, that God does not distinguish his servants by visible instances of his favour, and the wicked by his vengeance; but that for the generality ^d *all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked.* And the wicked swelling with pride, conscious at the same time to villany and success, say in their hearts, and sometimes aloud, ^e *Is there knowledge in the most high, and is there indeed a God who judgeth in the earth?*

But this great God, who now conceals himself behind second causes, who is patient with men during a proper time of trial, and who over-rules the sufferings of good men, and the prosperity of bad, so as to answer by them very beneficial and important purposes, this God will not always *hide himself*. No — ^f *he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the World in righteousness*; and make all men to know, that *he is not a God who hath pleasure in iniquity*, or who is regardless whether his reasonable and free creatures love or hate, reverence or despise him. The whole race of mankind present at once shall be fully convinced of his wisdom, holiness,

^c Ps. lxxiii. Jerem. xii. 1—

^e Ps. lxxiii. 11.

^d Eccl. ix. 2.

^f Acts xvii. 31.

ness, and justice; and the rewards of goodness and punishments of vice shall be far more publick than the most notorious instances of either ever were. There shall be no more any room left for the Atheist's presumption, or for the doubts and fears of the pious. The glory of the Saints shall appear to all, the Judge himself, all good Angels and good men, publicly declaring their approbation of their character and the immense value of their blessedness and reward; and wicked men and Devils by their silence, confusion, and despair, shall evidence their sense of it. And before this great assembly, the Judge shall condemn and sentence the wicked, Angels and Saints will applaud the sentence, Sinners and Devils own it just. What an important, what an affecting consideration is this! How tender is our sense of shame; how eager, how urgent our desire of glory; and how often do we fatally misapply these passions; while thro' a dread of the censure of mortals, of blind thoughtless infatuated sinners, we violate our duty, and are content to incur the disapprobation of God and of his Son now, and perhaps of many Angels, witnesses to our folly and guilt, and the certain universal infamy of the last day, if a sincere repentance do not prevent it! And if it does, yet we are sure to lose a considerable degree of glory, which a steady virtue would have secured. This future honour or disgrace will be visible
and

and publick in the face of the world; let us therefore oppose this to the present censures or applauses of sinners, and appeal in our thoughts from men partial and erroneous, to men better informed before the Tribunal of God, and the Court of Angels and Saints.

Its true, did men now reflect as justly and closely as they ought, the presence and inspection of an infinitely wise, almighty, and most righteous God, would outweigh every other consideration, and nothing would be valued in comparison of his approbation, nothing dreaded so much as his displeasure; but such is our weakness and inattention, a spiritual invisible Being, even tho' it be God himself, does not affect us so strongly, as a number of men before our eyes; and we can hardly support ourselves against these, against their insults, contempt, and condemnation, merely with the thought of an approving God. In condescension therefore to our weakness God has set before us a day, wherein his approbation or censure shall be sensible and publick, infinitely more publick than the most pompous triumph, or the most notorious disgrace. Am I then the only person influenced by Religion amidst bad company, who are disposed to commit some sin, perhaps lewdness or drunkenness? Do they scoff at *sobriety* and *chastity* as mean spirited things, and at the person who is resolved in obedience to the commands of Christ to preserve his purity, the possession of his Reason, and a capacity
for

for well governing his actions, as a slave, who is afraid to be free and to enjoy life? And does this almost bear me down, and prevail with me contrary to my convictions to indulge a debauch with them? Poor spirited christian, support thyself, if thou wantest this support, by looking forward to the last day, where thou shalt have an infinitely greater number of *spectators*, and all of them thine *approvers*, if thou art firm to thy duty, and resolutely abstain from vice.

2. This future Judgment shall be most *righteous* and *equitable*. Every circumstance, every thought, and action, shall be considered, which are necessary for forming a right judgment, and shewing the conduct and character of the person, and his demerits in a true light. This is intimated in the words cited from St. *John*. *And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God, and the Books were opened, and the dead were judged out of the things written therein, according to their works.* The Scripture mentions several *Books* of God. ^p There is the *Book of life*, which contains the names of those who are approved of God, and will be rewarded by him; in which there appears an allusion to the antient custom of enrolling the names of citizens, that it might certainly be known who had a right to the privileges of citizens. There is
also

^p Heb. xii. 23. Rev. xx. 15. Phil. iv. 3.

also the ^h *Gospel*, according to which christians will be judged, which is justly represented as then opened, because we shall be sentenced to life or death, according as we have believed or rejected, obeyed or disobeyed it. And there seems designed by St. ⁱ *John* another *Book*, which we may call the *Book of God's remembrance*, wherein all the thoughts, and actions, and words of men, are supposed to be recorded. You need not be told, that we are not to understand those things literally, neither God nor his Son wanting such remembrancers, who can neither err, forget, be ignorant, or judge amiss. All that we are to learn from these passages is the *great exactness* with which the Judge will proceed. The righteous shall be as certainly remembered and rewarded according to the *Gospel*, as if they and their good actions were recorded in a *Book*, and this Book with the *Gospel* lay open before the Judge on his Tribunal. And all the *actions* and *thoughts* of all the wicked shall be present to the observation of the Judge, and they sentenced according to them, and not one omitted; any more than if our Lord had written them all in a *Book*, and kept it open before him. Sins shall not then be omitted, because they lay concealed in the heart, and never for want of opportunity appeared in the life; nor shall any good desires or purposes, which

^h John xii. 48.

ⁱ Rev. xx. 12.

Rom. ii. 12.

Malac. iii. 16.

which merely thro' want of opportunity were not exerted, be then forgotten or unrewarded. The Judge being the *Son of God*, as well as the *Son of Man*, has a perfect knowledge of human nature, of it's capacities, abilities, and infirmities, of every circumstance of all our lives and actions, of the hindrances to virtue and piety, and the temptations to sin, of the restraints from sin, and the motives and assistances for forming a religious character, amidst which every one has lived; and ^k *he searcheth the heart and the reins*; and there is *no creature hidden from him*; for *all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him, to whom we are to give an account.*

It is not indeed certain, that at the last Judgment *every thought and action* of a man's life will be *distinctly* and *publickly* mentioned and examined, and *every sinner* be tried *seperately*; for then *millions of ages* would not be sufficient for the transactions of the last Judgment. Some hundreds of millions now live and act, obey or sin together; and if all these were to be judged *seperately* one after another, a period some hundred of millions of ages longer than the whole duration of our world, it is evident would not suffice for this Judgment, which yet in ^l *scripture* is usually represented as the work of a *Day*. Tho' the *Judge* be granted *equal* to the work of judging all mankind

^k Revel. ii. 23. Heb. iv. 13. ^l Acts xvii. 31. 2 Pet. iii. 7, &c.

kind *at once*, of attending at the same time without the least distraction to the cases and conduct of the whole human race, yet none of us are capable of a like attention, of taking our own trials, and observing at the same time the trials of an infinite number of men; it is therefore highly improbable, that every *thought* and *action*, of every particular person, will be distinctly observed, and mentioned at the last Judgment.

But it may be urged, is it not expressly and often declared, *that^m there is nothing secret which shall not be made known; that God will judge the secrets of all hearts by Jesus Christ; bring to light the hidden things of darkness; and make manifest the thoughts of the heart, that every good man may have praise from God; and that every work shall be brought into Judgment with every secret thing?* And is not this doctrine one of the mightiest restraints from secret sins, and excitements to secret piety and sincere goodness? I answer, these are indeed the express and certain declarations of Scripture, and will be fully made good; and the following supposition will I think come up to the just and full meaning of these Scriptures. That every person shall before the Tribunal of Christ be placed in a rank or degree of glory and honour, or of shame and infamy, in the view of all, exactly answering to his real
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^m Luke xii. 2. Rom. ii. 16. 1 Cor. iv. 5. Eccl. xii. 14.

goodness or viciousness, whether secret or open; and that in the allotting every one his station, his most secret sins or virtues shall not be forgotten by the Judge, but be present to his view, and influence his disposal. Every sin, tho' the most secret, will have its *visible* effect of shame before the general assembly of Angels and men, as *really* as if it were mentioned particularly, or had been most notoriously publick; and every good thought and purpose or disposition of the pious shall have as visible an effect in exalting their station of glory and felicity in the view of all. If we may build upon every particular circumstance of the description, which our Lord gives of the last Judgment, there are several in Matt. xxv. 31. — which favour this supposition, that men shall not be examined distinctly as to every *thought* and *action*, but rather ranked in companies, according to their being equal in guilt, and having indulged like vices; or equal in goodness, and distinguished by the same virtues. Thus all wicked christians who had been remarkably guilty of uncharitableness, particularly towards the suffering servants of Christ, are tried and condemned together. *Go ye Cursed, for I was an hungry and ye gave me no meat, &c.* This their distinguishing sin and its aggravations alone are declared to the world, and they receive publickly for it a sentence of condemnation. May we not therefore agreeably to this account of our Lord suppose, that
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all whose guilt is alike, who abused like advantages for virtue and piety, sinned against equal degrees of light and grace, and whose characters and lives have been alike vicious, will be ranked together; their common crimes be mentioned with the common aggravations of them, and they together doomed to a shame and misery proportioned exactly to their real guilt, to all their crimes whether before secret or open? And thus in like manner with regard to the righteous and their good actions.

For that the *sins* of the righteous shall not publickly be remembered against them, appears evident from the expressions used in Scripture, to denote God's forgiving their offences; such as his ⁿ *not remembering them any more his blotting them out; his covering them, and removing them as far away as the East is from the West; our being washed from our sins in the blood of Christ; and presented to the Father a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle; and presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.* And further, the Judge himself in the before cited passage *Matt. xxv.* publickly mentions only the *good actions* of the righteous, that they had visited, cloathed, and relieved him, when afflicted in his suffering brethren. It is very true, the *sinful thoughts and actions* of good men, whether particularly mentioned or not

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ⁿ Heb. x. 17. 1c. xliii. 25. Ps. xxxii. 1. ciii. 12. Rev i. 5. Eph. v. 27. Jude. ver. 24.

at the last day, will be *really judged*, and their glory and blessedness will be less in proportion to the number and aggravations of these. It therefore becomes them to be as careful to avoid all sin, even the most secret, as if it would be proclaimed before the general assembly of Angels and Men. Their most secret faults are now known to God and to Jesus, whose disapprobation is infinitely more to be dreaded than that of the whole world; and having a necessary ill influence on the improvement and perfection of their minds, will certainly sink them lower in the scale of honour and felicity. For tho' by repentance, by vows, and effectual resolutions of amendment, they may thro' Christ be forgiven, yet as in their commission of sin and recovery from it, and from its ill effects, they have spent so much of life, and failed of so many degrees of a progressive piety and goodness, which they might otherwise have obtained with the same serious resolution and diligence, by which they have recovered themselves to repentance, they will of consequence lose a proportionable degree of the future glory and blessedness; and in this respect their secret sins will appear to the world.

Further; as the last Judgment seems principally designed for ° *clearing and vindicating* the conduct of divine Providence in the government

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° Rom. ii. 5. *ἡμερὰ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας.*
Thess i. 6.

vernment of the world, and letting the children of men into the reasons of his most mysterious dispensations, as far as shall be necessary to make the general scheme of Providence appear even to the whole world to be worthy of God, so far particular characters and actions may be publicly examined and exposed to view. Have some under the colour of Religion carried on successfully the most wicked designs, (as hath been done particularly by ^p *antichristian* powers and persecutors) and thus brought a great disgrace on Religion? These persons shall be stript of their disguise, and exposed naked to the scorn of the world, and true Religion appear to be intirely free from the least share in their wicked and destructive practices. Have persons of real and exalted piety and merit been ill treated, defamed, and persecuted, and their worth quite buried under heaps of misrepresentation, and calumny, as were the Apostles and first Christians? Their virtues shall be ^a *publicly* mentioned, to the eternal confusion of those who thus abused them. Is the great prosperity of such a wicked man now a scandal to many? Perhaps it may appear to have been the reward of the real and eminent goodness of a Parent; or perhaps it will then appear he had qualities which inabled him to do great good to his country, or like *Nabuchadnezzar*

^p Revel. xv. 4. xix. 1—6. ^a 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. Matt.
v. 10—12. x. 25, 26, 32.

to effect important schemes of the divine Providence. And where men have gloried and triumphed in successful wickedness, and been surrounded by base flatterers, who have varnished over their actions, concealed the most odious parts of them, and cloathed the other with false ornaments, and forged virtues, to the imposing on the injudicious many; which hath been done by *Orators* and *Poets* for the greatest Tyrants and Destroyers of mankind, *Alexander* for instance, *Julius Caesar* and *Lewis* the 14th of *France*; in such cases, where men have been eminently wicked, and at the same time have dazzled the crowd with their external grandeur, and avoided the condemnation and punishment which their crimes deserved, it seems most highly worthy of God, and agreeable to the *Scripture* account of the last Judgment, that such great sinners should be publicly exposed, and loaded with an infamy great as their guilt, as the greatness they have abused, and the miseries they have brought on the world.

Again; this consideration that every person shall be judged *immediately after death* for his own actions, seems to justify the opinion, that they shall be no further *particularly* examined and judged at last, than is necessary to illustrate the conduct of divine Providence. In the *parable* of the rich man and *Lazarus* our Lord informs us, that immediately

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after they die persons are assigned to different places ; and as the luxurious rich man is tormented, and the pious *Lazarus* happy in *Abraham's* bosom, immediately after death, their tempers and lives must have undergone the inquiry and judgment of God. The ^t wise man also says expressly, that when the *dust returns to Earth, the Spirit returns to God who gave it ; who will bring every work into Judgment with every secret thing.* Now if the spirits of the wicked return to God, it must be only to receive their sentence, for "*the foolish shall not stand in his sight*, and none but they *that work righteousness dwell in his holy hill, or in the heavenly Jerusalem ;* and *Judas* immediately after his death *went to his own place.* Besides these Scriptures, and others which mention the ^w *immediate happiness* of good men, and therefore prove that they have been tried and approved before the general Judgment ; from the nature of the soul and it's state after it is separated from the body we might reasonably infer it. For immediately on leaving the body, the soul passes into the presence of God ; who being *really* every where, is hid from our view only by this veil and inclosure of flesh. When we put off the body, we are also freed from that which clouded our judgment, and hindered our passing a right sentence on ourselves, are removed

^t Eccl. xii. 7, 14. ^u Ps. v. 5. xv. 1, 2. Rev. xxi. 27. Acts i. 25. ^w 2 Cor. v. 1—9. Philip i. 23.

removed from the diversions and enchantments of the world, and from the company of ill judging men, whose opinions often make us think wrong as to our own conduct, and hinder us from reflecting impartially upon it, and we converse immediately with good or evil * *Angels*, from either of whom we may easily learn our state and our doom: when this is our case, and we are conscious to the immediate presence of God, all-knowing and most righteous, the soul cannot then but reflect with the greatest concern and strictness on it's conduct, and acquit or condemn itself as it deserves; especially as God will direct and confirm this sentence, by assigning departed spirits to different guards, and removing them to * *widely distant* habitations.

If it be objected, to what purpose then is the *general* Judgment, if men are judged and sentenced immediately after death? I answer, men may be considered in two views, either as *reasonable* and *free* beings, accountable for their actions, capable of holiness or sin, and possessed by one of these; or as *members* of a *society*, and *parts* of a *great moral system*, managed and governed by God for some great end. As *single persons* they are judged immediately after death, and are determined to happiness or misery, and enjoy or suffer the natural consequences of a pious or sinful life. But as they are descended from *Adam*, are

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* Luke xvi. 22. * xvi. 26.

Parts of this vast community, and their Conduct has fallen under a peculiar direction of the divine Providence in pursuing it's general scheme ; as they are related to others, and have considerably influenced their virtue and happiness, or the contrary ; and their behaviour may have occasioned some remarkable steps of Providence, and a knowledge of it is necessary for placing the wisdom, holiness, or goodness of the divine government in a convincing light ; so far shall their particular characters and conduct be displayed, and they be particularly judged at the last day. Thus the remorse of conscience and the stings of raging passions and base ungratified desires, as they are the natural fruit and punishment of personal vices ; and the joy, purity, activity, and perfection which naturally spring out of a life of virtue and are it's proper reward ; these take place immediately after death. But as the mortality of mankind thro' *Adam*, and their restoration to a capacity of immortal life by the Son of God, are an essential part of the general plan of Providence, this universal resurrection is deferred till the general Judgment. The representing these two Judgments in this light justifies our belief of both, and shews that neither of them is superfluous, but that each answers important ends of the divine government. I might observe further to confirm this account, that usually when our Lord or his Apostles refer

refer christians for encouragement or support to the day of general Judgment, it is with a view to their ² *publick* conduct, and to animate them against the slanders and persecutions which they suffered for his cause. Whereas when they recommend a personal virtue as ² *purity* of heart, *charity* of disposition, and the like, they promise a reward not deferred till the general Judgment, but to be enjoyed as soon as we drop the body, and join *the spirits of just men made perfect*. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; and charity never faileth*. These dispositions immediately qualify the pure and benevolent for their proper happiness; they enjoy it here in a lower degree in the knowledge and love of God, and in conscious goodness, and when they drop the body enjoy it in perfection. An instance of the other kind you have, where to encourage his Apostles and others to confess him before men, in the face of danger and persecution, he promises to *confess them before his Father, and all his holy Angels*.

Upon the whole, I would not be understood to determine *positively* the *exact Manner* according to which the proceedings of the last day shall be conducted. I only offer to consideration what to me appears to agree with the hints given in Scripture with relation to this great affair, and not unworthy the di-

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² Matt. x. 32. xvi. 24 — 2 Theff. i. 6. ² Matt. v. 4—8. 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 10.

vine manner of proceeding in other instances. As far only as it is countenanced by these you are to regard it. Our Lord was not solicitous to gratify our curiosity, by an orderly and minute detail of the circumstances of the last Judgment, but contented himself with revealing all that was necessary to give our faith the most powerful and happy influence on our conduct; assuring us that no secrecy or disguise can hide our sins from the view of God, or the notice of the last day; that not the most hidden vice or virtue shall be overlooked, not even those actions which because we have wholly forgotten, we might imagine were intirely lost to us, but that all shall be considered in determining the characters and states of men at last; and that it therefore most nearly concerns us, with the utmost attention to regulate by his Gospel every thought and action, during our whole time of trial. To conclude this representation of the *Manner* of this great transaction.

3. It will not only be most *publick* and *equitable* but the justice and equity of it shall be acknowledged by all. What St. Paul says of another important dispensation of Providence, that it was so conducted that ^b *every mouth might be stopped, and all the world appear guilty before God*, may with yet stronger reason be applied to this final determination. Every person in this grand assembly, having
either

^b Rom. iii. 19.

either in the seperate state, or from what they have just seen and heard, gotten more just apprehensions and the firmest persuasion of the perfections of God, who cannot err or judge, or act amiss; and the conscience of every sinner thus awakened fully convincing him of his own guilt, he must acknowledge the sentence past on himself to be right; and his knowledge of the justice exercised towards him, and his natural reasonings on the divine perfections, must convince him also of the righteousness of the sentence past upon others. Our *Saviour* seems to intimate this general acquiescence, even where he represents the pleas that might be offered, with the solid answers given to them, and the silence which followed. It does not appear probable, that any at last will have the face to object against the sentence they hear from such a Judge: this only seems designed to be taught us by our Lord, that such justice and equity should appear throughout the whole proceeding, that no one should have room to object against any part of it; and that every thing which could possibly be offered, in excuse or aggravation of the guilty, would be considered by their Judge, and their condemnation be exactly correspondent. So that it is highly probable the judicial proceedings will be closed with such a shout of approbation from good Angels and good men, without any clamorous

clamorous murmur either from wicked men or Devils; as St. *John* describes following God's judging and punishing mystical *Babylon*. ^d *Alleluia; Salvation, and Glory, and Honour, and Power unto the Lord our God; for true and righteous are his judgments!*

Upon the whole, what is absolutely certain as to the *Manner* of the last Judgment is this. That we must all appear personally and publickly before the Son of God incarnate, seated on a majestic Tribunal—That we shall receive a most righteous sentence according to our works; that ^e *to whom much has been given, of them much will be required;* and of them to whom little has been given, he will ask less——That our glory or infamy, our happiness or misery will be such, as shall manifest to the whole world the exact degree of our holiness or viciousness—That the most secret thoughts and actions shall not escape the consideration of our Judge, but contribute their proportion to our acquittal or condemnation——And that the whole will be so transacted, as fully to satisfy every person of the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness of God's government, and of his particular dispensations to him, and of the justice of the sentence past upon all.

Let me conclude at present with a Reflection or two, on this part of the important subject before us.

1. Will

^d Rev. xix. 1, 2.

^e Luke xii. 47, 48.

1. Will every thought and action, even the most secret, be brought to light, and weighed in an exact ballance by a most righteous and all-knowing Judge? This should teach us *seriously to attend*, and *impartially examine* our temper and behaviour now, and to be careful not to deceive ourselves. [†] *If we judge ourselves, we shall not be judged*, so as to be *condemned with the world*; that is, if we so judge, as to correct in time whatever we find amiss. We are apt now thro' a partial fondness and foolish self-love, to turn our eyes from our own faults and vices, as if we thought, that because we overlooked or forgot them, God would overlook them, and Christ forget them at last. This makes us angry with those who are our true and best friends, who kindly reprove us for our real faults, and place our conduct in it's proper light before us; as if they *made* the faults which they *blamed*, because we were so blind as not to observe them before. But how unreasonable is this conduct. Could we reform our faults without being sensible of them, or would our forgetting them prevent their ill influence, or make them forgotten by our Judge, such a way of acting would have some reason in it. But what will it avail to deceive ourselves, when we cannot escape his exact notice and impartial sentence?

Am I then a stranger to the inward life of Religion, contented with [‡] *a form of godliness,*

[†] 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32.

[‡] 2 Tim. iii. 5.

ness, with the external profession, and with going thro' the usual forms of devotion, tho' void of an inward real affection, of an habitual reverence of God, a prevailing concern to please him, a warm and greatful sense of his goodness, and a hearty devotedness to his will? Or am I under the character of honesty and goodness, carrying on some base designs, and unjust in secret? Am I, notwithstanding a profession of being dead to the world, passionately ingaged to it's objects, negligent of the purity and perfection of my mind, and undesirous of the rational and divine pleasures of heaven? Am I guilty of loving the world immoderately, and of refusing that proportion of my wealth to uses of charity and piety, which the Gospel demands; thinking to make amends for the fault by a more strict temperance, or zealous external devotion? Is this or the like my true character, and am I secretly afraid to know my real state, to examine my heart, to acquaint myself with my defects, and see what ground I stand upon? Does my heart flie off when I would bring it to a close inspection; and do I content myself with this, that I shall fare at last as well as others, and am now as well thought of? Let me to cure this fatal folly regard fixedly the last Tribunal; let me in thought place myself before it, and seriously consider, whether such an indevotion to God, such an earthliness, covetousness or sensuality of disposition

position, will bear the light of the great day. Should I be willing to be honestly reprov'd in publick for this temper, and to have it now laid naked before the view of men? Would not such a thought make me sensible of its deformity, when I reflect what others might blame in it? And can I continue unsensible, when by faith I place myself before the bar of the Son of God, at which I must indeed soon appear? How unaccountable is the negligence and security of the greater part of christians, who profess to believe this Judgment! Who could think by their behaviour they were to appear before it; and to be sentenced for eternity according to their present conduct; when perhaps they never once seriously thought what God requires in order to their being approved, or what they have done towards it? My Friends, tho' we may be partial to ourselves, our Judge will be impartial; tho' we may forget, he remembers; *the Books will be opened, and we shall be judg'd out of the things written therein, according to our works.*

2. Is the general Judgment especially designed for clearing up the difficulties which perplex us, in judging of the divine Providence? Let us patiently wait this time of manifestation, *steadily*, tho' in some cases *implicitly*, believe the wisdom, goodness, and purity of the divine management, and refer all our doubts to the solution of this day.

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This is evidently a most reasonable conduct. From the perfections of God demonstrated in the formation and continual preservation of the world, in the frame of the human mind, in its *moral sense* of good and evil, its necessary inward approbation of the one, and condemnation of the other, and in the natural rewards annexed to piety and virtue, and in the evils naturally growing out of vice and impiety, and from the express declarations of his Word, we are assured, that he is a God in no degree indifferent to righteousness or wickedness, that ^h *from heaven his holy habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth; that he hath pleasure in them who fear him, and who hope in his mercy; but that the wicked are an abomination in his sight; that verily there is a reward for the righteous, and that there will appear a God to judge in the earth.* We are further assured from our own Reason, that the designs of an infinite mind which take in a long succession of ages, many of which past before we entered the world, and many more will come on after we have left it, that his dispensations, which regard the state and interests of all mankind, their secret tempers, virtues, or vices, and the great aim of which is the moral perfection of a world of free creatures; we are assured, that such dispensations, and a
design

^h Pf. xxxiii. 13. xxxiv. 15. cxlvii. 11. Prov. iii. 32. Pf. lviii. 11.

design so vast, which includes infinite particulars, must in it's execution be at present incomprehensible by us. That supposing the conductor to be infinite in his wisdom, goodness, and power, and the execution to be worthy of these perfections, yet there will necessarily arise a variety of events, for which we cannot account.

We complain perhaps that many *good men* are disappointed, afflicted, oppressed, and destroyed, and many *good designs* defeated, while *wicked men* triumph and *wicked designs* succeed—But let us consider we are not always certain, that they whom we reckon good men are really such, and if they were, we know not what need they had of afflictions, and what benefit they received from them. And we have this clear proof, that the difficulties we find in reconciling the dispensations of God's Providence with our ideas of his perfections, arise from our ignorance; that tho' many good men think the dispensations of God towards *others* unaccountable, yet few or none complain of his dealings with *themselves*; because the knowledge they have of their own character and state, inables them to see the wisdom and goodness of the divine conduct towards them. We do not certainly know neither, that designs we thought good, if they had succeeded would certainly have had good effects; or perhaps the world was not ripe for them, or
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if they had taken place, they might have thwarted some better designs, and the like. We are ignorant also what wise and good purposes God may answer by the greatness of such a wicked man. Perhaps he has some great qualities which render him more useful in such a station, than many good men would be; or he may be raised for the necessary punishment of other bad men, or of trying and improving the faith, virtue, and constancy of the good. ⁱ *Nebuchadnezzar* a proud, impious, idolatrous, and tyrannical Prince, who was exalted on the ruins of all the nations of the East and of the people of God, was yet raised by God, and an instrument guided by his unerring wisdom and goodness. He was appointed to scourge all the idolatrous nations round *Judea*, and the *Jews* themselves for yielding to the contagion of their idolatry; and miseries he brought upon them, which from the clear predictions of their Prophets they knew to be the punishment of their idolatry, effectually reclaiming them to the belief and worship of the one true God; their dispersion by this Tyrant all over the East spread every where the knowledge of the true God, and made way for the more easy reception afterward of the Gospel among all those nations.

But granting that in many cases we cannot assign any probable reasons of the divine conduct,

ⁱ *Isai.* x. 12—15.

Jerem. xxv. 12, &c.

duct, is this any just ground for dissatisfaction? Could we comprehend all the designs of an infinite mind, we must be Gods; or if they were proportioned to our present narrow views, they would be unworthy of his infinite wisdom. Yet you will say, it is *painful* to have such obscurities before us, as tempt us often to doubt, or to have hard thoughts of the Providence of God; and that it is desirable to have those clouds scattered. I grant it is desirable; and when God hath assured us that he will fully vindicate his perfections, we ought with patience to expect the appointed season, and in the mean time implicitly to believe and adore. The sinner's concluding from his uninterrupted prosperity, that God did not regard him, is mentioned in Scripture as a reason, why God would hasten to punish him, and vindicate his proceedings. ** Thou thoughtest I was altogether such a one as thyself; but I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before thine eyes.*

Let us suppose a Prince, of whose probity, wisdom, and kindness you had made large experience, was engaged in a great design, the success of which required secrecy; suppose he assured you on the word of a King, that your advantage was in great part his design in it, and that he had all desirable reason to expect success, and that after a few months were

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* Ps. l. 21.

past he would lay the whole scheme before you, and convince you of it; would you not be quite inexcusable if you complained and murmured, because you could not account for every step he took, before he let you into his whole design; and if you judged of him from your own imperfect views, from your ignorance and peevishness, and condemned him? Would it not be reasonable to place more confidence in an *earthly* governour, of acknowledged prudence and probity? And shall we not place an intire confidence in an infinitely wise, holy, and good God, who cannot but design the best in every scheme he pursues, and who cannot be controuled or baffled in his designs?

We have been shocked for instance at reading the history of the last age, and observing the long prosperity of *Lewis* the 14th. We are amazed at the divine patience, which permitted him perfidiously to persecute and root out the Protestants of *France*, and to ravage all his neighbours, enslave many of them, and indanger the liberty of *Europe*; and so often by fraud, violence, and scandalous breach of treaties, to obtain his ends; and after a long life filled with the most unjust and mischievous actions, and having occasioned the slaughter of *millions*, to die in peace. While living to be extolled to the skies by base flatterers, and mercenary poets, and to have his memo-

ry deified after his death; let us be *patient* a while, and the veil will be withdrawn from before the designs of God, and we shall see clearly, and comprehend fully the wisdom, justice, and goodness which formed and executed them. We shall see what *vices* God punished and cured in his own people by his means, what *virtues* he exercised and improved, and to what eminence of honour and felicity many were by this discipline advanced. We shall behold also this haughty Monarch, who at high prices bought the praise of the finest geniuses of his country, and by them endeavoured to silence the reproaches of his own conscience; yea, whose most notorious vices, his cruelty, preperfidiousness, and persecutions, were by the pretended ministers of Christ consecrated into virtues, and a warm zeal for God; we shall see this man stand naked, unbefriended, and without a train before the Tribunal of the Son of God; his very flatterers shall deride, reproach, and curse him; his *victories*, on which he valued himself, shall appear as so many complicated *robberies* and *murders*, and the greater they were, the greater will be his infamy, confusion, despair, and punishment. The like may be applied to every other difficulty of this kind. ¹ *Let us therefore be patient, Brethren, and establish our hearts unto*

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*the*¹ James v. 7, 8.

the coming of the Lord, which draweth nigh.
This inference St. James makes from the
prospect of the deserved miseries of the wicked,
when our Lord should come to judge them;
let us think and act agreeably to it, and
^m never envy sinners, nor learn their ways.

^m Prov. xxvii. 17.





S E R M O N VI.

Of the Persons who shall be judged.

2 COR. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



OF several important truths which these words of the Apostle contain, relating to a future general Judgment, I have treated the following—the *Certainty* of this grand event—the wisdom of God in appointing his *Son* to be our *Judge*—and the *Manner* in which he will judge us, most publickly and equitably—my method leads me now to discourse,

IV. Of the *Persons* who must appear, and take their trials before this great Tribunal; and they are no other than *we ourselves*, I who preach this Doctrine and *you* who hear it, yea, the *whole human race*. Nothing therefore can more nearly concern us all than this subject, since it is *our temper* that will be examined, *our conduct* that will be reviewed, and *our state* that will be determined for ^a *eternal happiness or everlasting destruction*, by the sentence of this great day. My Text says, *we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

All who have lived and acted as *moral agents*, in all the successive generations of mankind, from the beginning of the world to its period; whatever various dispensations of Religion they have lived under, whether under the light of *Nature* only, or enjoying the additional light and encouragements of *Revelation*, all shall be judged, *Jew and Gentile, Christian and Mahometan*; and be rewarded, or punished, according as they have obeyed the will of God, however made known to them, or disobeyed it, improved their different advantages for becoming pious and good, or neglected them. ^b *Glory, honour, and peace shall be to every one that worketh good, to the Jew*

Matt. xxv. 46. 2 Thess. i. 9. ^c Rom. ii. 10—16.

Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God. As many as have sinned without Law, i. e. a revealed and written Law, shall also perish without Law; and as many as have sinned under the Law, shall be judged by the Law, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ. And our judge himself expressly declares, his authority as Judge will thus extend to all mankind. ^c All that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation. And St. Paul represents this universal extent of the last Judgment as established by the Oath of God. ^d As I live saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. And God will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doth evil; of the Jew first and also of the Gentile. And because some would be found alive at our Lord's coming, to in-

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clude

^c John v. 28, 29. ^d Rom. xiv. 11, 12. ii. 6,—9.

clude these also St. Paul declares, * *our Lord Jesus Christ shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, and his kingdom.*

Reason also joins it's testimony to these express declarations of divine *Revelation*. For as all mankind are *equally* the creatures of God, and whatever distinctions and pre-eminences they possess in regard to each other, are all alike subject to his dominion, dependent on his bounty, and governable by his laws: for the same reasons that God determines, to call to an account, to reward or punish any one intelligent and free Being of our race, every one alike in circumstances proper for a trial, and alike capable of virtue or vice, of obedience or disobedience, will be called to an account, and suitably recompenced. For the supream and infinitely wise God does not act from unreasonable humour and arbitrary pleasure, but is always determined in his conduct by the right of the case, by the eternal reason and fitness of things, *'is no respecter of persons*; and must therefore equally love equal goodness, and alike abhor wickedness in every person, and alike follow them with proper marks of his approbation or abhorrence.

But this is an article that requires rather a *serious consideration*, than a *laboured proof*; none having the face to declare, that they depend upon being exempt from the general Judgment. However it may be useful to specify

* 2 Tim. iv. 1 † Rom. ii. 11. Acts x. 34, 35. 1 Pet. i. 17.

specify *some sorts* of persons, and prove they are included under the general appointment; who tho' they dare not openly and seriously declare they are assured of an exemption, yet are apt secretly to flatter themselves they may escape, at least too generally act as if they expected to pass unobserved, or by their quality or power to shield themselves from the inquiry or justice of the Judge. Let me therefore observe and prove, that the *young* shall be brought into Judgment, as well as persons of *riper* years, that the *great* and *mighty* and *rich* must submit to this Judgment, as well as the *meanest* of men, and that the *low* and *poor* condition of any will not occasion their being overlooked.

1. The *young* shall be brought into Judgment, as well as the *old*. This truth the royal Preacher warmly inculcates, at the same time intimating how prone youth are to disbelieve or disregard it. *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the light of thine eyes; but know thou, that for all these things, God will bring thee into Judgment.* Young persons are apt to think, that because they are but just entered upon life, and feel warm inclinations to be entertained and amused by the objects of sense, and an indisposition for a serious attention to their conduct, that they have therefore

* Ecclef. xi. 9.

fore nothing to do, but to pursue their inclinations, and may leave serious consideration and circumspection for maturer age, when they seem to be in season, and that God will not reckon with them for the fallies of their youth. But how evidently unreasonable is this conclusion.

If *inclination* be a warantable rule for the conduct of *rational* creatures, and this be a sufficient excuse for neglecting our duty, that we are *indisposed* to it, you might neglect Religion and Virtue thro' your *whole* lives, and hope never to be call'd to an account, or punished for it. The desires of wealth and distinction will succeed to those of sensual pleasure, as you advance in life, and when you grow old, a love to earthly objects increased by long indulgence, the infirmities and the cares of age, and the desire of mony usually growing with it, will ingross your minds as strongly as sensual pleasures do now; and an absolute disuse of serious reflection, and of attending to objects great, spiritual, and divine, will render you utterly incapable of your duty: and at this rate of acting a reasonable and immortal Being may pass away his whole time of trial, without once attending to the great purposes for which he was sent into the world; and yet hope when God has thus tried him, and he hath proved reprobate, that he shall escape the displeasure and condemnation of his Sovereign and Judge.

Further;

Further; an averseness of inclination to serious thinking, and the difficulty of curbing the warmth and levity of Youth, and restraining the passion for sensual pleasures, can never be a reason against attending to our conduct, and expecting to be judged for it; since this indisposition, and those inclinations are principal parts of our trial, and render us capable of an *approved* virtue and piety, and of a great reward. Where would there be any trial, of your love to God, and to that which is *morally* good, and of the steddiness of your virtue, if you had no taste for any other pleasures, but the pleasures of the knowledge and love of God, of virtue and goodness? And what reason can you have to think, your Creator will not as justly demand from you the sacrifice of your youthful vanities and pleasures, when inconsistent with your duty, as from the ambitious the sacrifice of his preferments, or from the covetous of his wealth, and call you to account and punish your refusal?

Again; as Youth is attended with some hindrances to serious consideration, and an eminent virtue and piety, it has also advantages peculiar to it; and every capacity, every advantage for goodness and devotion is a talent; the worth of which a most wise God exactly knows, which therefore he could not give in vain, but will reckon with us as to our improvement of it. The warmth and vigour of mind which hurries you on in the
pursuit

pursuit of sensual pleasures, if ingaged by the great objects of Religion would carry you an equal way towards them, give you more lively satisfactions in the exercises of devotion and the practice of virtue, and make you more extensively beneficent. Your tempers are *soft* and *apt* to receive impressions, restrain for some time the levity of your minds, and fix your thoughts on the great concerns of your souls and eternity, and you will find this yielding impressive temper as great an advantage in Religion. Besides, your minds are in some degree *uningaged* by other objects; at least they have not a rooted possession of your hearts, nor have you yet established bad habits; you may therefore more easily fix virtuous inclinations and habits of goodness. Your *relish* of life and its enjoyments is more *sensible* and *sprightly* than that of older persons; your gratitude therefore to the Author of your beings and of all your enjoyments may be more warm, your obedience more free and chearful, and from both you may receive more present satisfaction. Not having been often deceived you are more *forward* to *hope*; your hopes therefore from God, and for eternity may be more bright and inspire you with a more exalted devotion, and excite you to a more active virtue and chearful obedience. Your *sense* of what is *honourable* is not yet vitiated by frequent base compliances, for the sake of serving some low interests;

interests; you are therefore more strongly sensible of the beauty of virtue, of gratitude, of divine love, and more abhorrent, when you consider it, from the baseness and ingratitude of disregarding a God of infinite goodness, your Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, who made you that he might make you for ever happy, who has pursued the design with an unchanging goodness and at an infinite expence; and who hath required nothing in return but your love, and your obedience to commands, which yield you the best satisfactions here, perfect your natures, and immediately prepare you to enjoy the immense felicity he hath promised to the obedient. I should digress too much, should I proceed further to represent the peculiar advantages you have for Religion and Virtue in Youth, and the obligations you are under to cultivate them; and consequently the great reason you have to expect being called to give an account how you have improved them, and the great wisdom of having a constant regard to this account, which of itself would be a powerful check to the levity and inconsiderateness of Youth.

Further; you see *you may die young*, and if Youth is no security against death, why should it be thought a security against Judgment; and what can more naturally follow the conclusion of a state of trial, than an inquiry and proper retributions? And what can be a more proper employment of your thoughts

thoughts, than a continual regard to it, and preparation for it? God who made you capable of Religion and Virtue, and placed you on this stage of action, as he always sees, cannot but attend to your conduct, be pleased with your improving the noble powers he hath given you, and offended if you debase them; and your neglecting to improve well your time, instead of securing you from being called to the account you dread to think of, will only hasten the summons, provoking God to cut short the time you are trifling away, and to take from you advantages for happiness which you abuse.

Be pleased to consider further, such is the *nature* of man, that if God at all desire our perfection and happiness, he cannot but insist on our improving well our Youth, and judge and punish those who waste it; since the usual consequence of neglecting the prime of life, is the loss of the whole, a fixed indisposition for Religion and Virtue, and a fatal addition of strength to those irregular passions which defile the soul in the sight of God, render us utterly unfit for his favour, and for resembling him in true goodness now, and for the enjoyment of him in heaven. Even the goodness of God will determine him to regard the behaviour of the Young, and to call them to a reckoning for their Youth. His service is our greatest happiness, and the earlier we engage in it, as we thereby re-commend

commend ourselves the more to his favour, so we procure to ourselves more solid satisfaction at present. Our merciful Creator cannot but will his creatures should enjoy all the happiness for which he hath made them; and cannot but be offended with those who will frustrate the designs of his love, and make themselves wretched, in spite of the provision he hath made for their being happy.

Finally; consider the whole of the present life is so short a space, if compared with the infinite value and duration of the happiness and reward promised to diligence and fidelity, that God cannot but expect we should devote the whole of it to him, and strictly judge us for wasting any part of it, especially the best. The whole of the longest life of labour and service is not equal to a day, in comparison with eternity; and will it not argue a most criminal insensibility to the infinite goodness of God, to alienate any part of this day from him? Will it not evidence such a contempt of the happiness he hath designed for us, and put in our power to be secured by the gratitude and obedience of a short life, as must render us most offensive to him, and draw down his vengeance at last?

Be persuaded then while in Youth seriously to consider these things, constantly to regard the God under whose view you act, and at whose bar you must soon be accountable.

Ask

Ask yourselves with concern and impartiality, what you have done to obtain his approbation. You may forget him, but his eye is always upon you. You may put the evil day far from you, but Death and Judgment are at the door, and will shortly seize you. What will it then signify to forget it? What, but your certain ruin? You may be peculiarly pleasing to God, by devoting the prime of life to him, who in his ^h Word has distinguished with peculiar marks of his approbation the instances of an early piety; witness the Prophet *Samuel*, King *Josiah*, and the Evangelist *Timothy*. You may thus enjoy life in the best manner, restraining all disorderly affections, keeping your minds free from the torment of guilty reflections, and from the dread of death; and ennoble the common enjoyments of life by a pleasing sense of the divine favour, and the prospect of consummate and eternal blessedness in heaven. These will be the good fruits of regulating your conduct by a constant regard to a future Judgment, and abstaining from whatever would expose you to condemnation. Whether you will think of it or not, you must be judged. It is not in your power to escape the notice of God now, or decline his inquiry at last; why will you then shut it out of your regard and concern now? Should you live to old age, yet you must account for your youthful time; and

* Prov. viii. 17.
xxxiv. 27.

1 Sam. ii. 26.
2 Tim. iii. 15.

2 Chron.

and if you have spent it ill, it will have a certain bad influence on your future years, and without continual labour and violent struggling, a most fatal influence on your eternity. Or you may probably die young, and you must then be judged; and if you have improved Youth aright, death will only hasten your reward; and your sincere purposes, endeavours, and preparations for a pious and useful life, the execution of which death alone prevented, shall not lose their reward.

2. The *great*, and *mighty*, and *rich* must appear before the Tribunal of the Son of God, and receive their doom; such as were above being called to account for their vices by men, or who by management, bribes, or threatenings, secured themselves from punishment here. Nothing is more apt to puff men up than successful wickedness, and while they escape unpunished, or bear down all before them in this world, they come to imagine, there is no God who observes them in order to punish them hereafter. *They say, how does God know, and is there knowledge in the most high?* The Scripture therefore is very express in assuring them, that their power or wealth will prove no security against the inquiry, and condemnation of the last day. *I saw*, says St. John, *the dead, small and great, stand before God.* And our Lord, in the parable of the *rich man* and
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Lazarus, after describing his pompous luxurious way of life, and his wealth lavished without any regard to God or charity to the poor, adds, ^k *the rich man died, and was buried, and in hell lift up his eyes being in torments.* His receiving good things in this life, was so far from insuring the better things of another, that his abuse of them occasioned his heavier torment. Thus also *St. John* describes, as it appeared to him in a vision, the judgment of God overtaking the great and mighty sinners of this world. *And the heavens departed as a scroll when it is rowled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places; and the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bond-man, and every free-man, hid themselves in the dens, and in the rocks of the mountains: and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?*

What can power avail against Omnipotence? Wealth cannot bribe a God, who besides his being immutably righteous, is all sufficient in himself, hath all the creatures of the creation at his command, gave them the wealth on which they boast, and can take it again when

^k Luke xvi. 19.

¹ Revel. vi. 14.

when he pleases. Wealth and power may give mortals distinction with regard to each other, but what are they to God? ^m *All nations, with all their kings and great men, are before him, but as the drop of the bucket, or the small dust of the ballance.* He can with a frown blast their strength, destroy their possessions, put an end to their health and pleasure; or change their friends and dependents into enemies and oppressors. Add to this, that death at once removes all the grounds of their presumption, strips them of all their wealth, greatness, and power, and places them before the bar of God, as humble and dependent as the meanest: and he will regard their former state and power, not as reasons against their being judged, but as trusts for which they are strictly accountable.

And as they cannot *defend* themselves against God, neither can they put in any *reasonable* claim to an exemption from his cognisance. You are wealthy, you are powerful; it is granted. But pray who made you thus? Who made and preserves the world, on a small portion of which you value yourselves so much? Who formed your understandings and active powers, and placed you in favourable circumstances for acquiring this wealth, power, and influence? The same God who made the poor, made you. The

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same hand that upholds them in life, upholds you. He hath given you a nature capable of virtue and piety, as he hath to them. He hath given you more talents, and qualified you for doing greater good, and rising to a more exalted piety, and he must therefore expect an answerable improvement, and bring you into Judgment. Your independence on others, your power by which you brave human justice, your wealth which you make your *strong Tower*, these are all trusts which you have received from him; and instead of priviledging you from being called to an account, will make a great part of your reckoning, and if you have abused them, will aggravate your condemnation. ** God accepteth not the person of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of his hands.* How absurd is the reasoning on which you build your confidence. God has given us more than others, therefore we are *less obliged* to reverence, love, and obey him. He hath intrusted us with more, therefore he will be less concerned to bring us to an account; when the greater the trust, the greater the reason to expect it. He hath put it into your power to imitate his goodness, in doing good extensively; and to approve your love of what is excellent, by moderating your sensual desires and indulgences, and prefer-
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* Job xxxiv. 19.

ring the satisfactions of devotion, virtue, and beneficence. And will you oppose his designs, imploy wealth and power only to injure others, or to gratify some mean inclinations of your own, and yet hope to pass unpunished? Will you be more wicked than others, and shall your offences be more aggravated, and will you yet hope that a just God will be less ready to punish you? Can any conclusion be more absurd?

But perhaps the prosperous sinner founds his hopes on his long prosperity and impunity. A very deceitful foundation. For what is the longest life here, when compared with the eternity before us, and in which God may sufficiently manifest his displeasure against his vices? God is willing that Virtue and Religion should be our free choice, and therefore allows the sinner a proper time for trial, and does not immediately follow his transgressions with deserved punishment. He makes powerful sinners answer wise ends of his Providence, in punishing others, exercising the virtues of the good, or correcting their faults; and therefore suffers them to flourish for a little while; but when he hath used them as his rod, he will cast them into the fire. Consider this then all ye who are distinguished by wealth, and power, and prosperity. These as they are great trusts, and capable of being improved to your own great happiness, and to

the general good, are also great temptations to pride, sensuality, a disregard to God and eternity, and the like. Nothing will more assist you to render them indeed blessings to yourselves, as well as to the world, than to look on them as talents, and yourselves as stewards; and frequently to consider the instructions of your Lord, and to look forward to the inquiry he will make into your improvements. A serious and habitual regard to this will prevent their having any ill influence, give you all the real satisfactions that belong to them, and ingage you to secure your eternal inheritance. Perhaps you are vicious, and others dare not reprove your vices, or cannot punish them. But what has the Judge of the world to fear from you, or what have you to hope from him, merely on the credit of your wealth; who when he lived on earth preferred a state of poverty, and the company of the pious poor?

Are you so wise and happy as to imploy your wealth and power for the good of mankind? You can then bear to think of a future reckoning; and frequent serious thoughts of this kind will assist you to use these in the best manner. ° *Are you not high-minded, nor do you trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth you all things richly to enjoy? Are you rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,*
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laying up in store for yourselves a good treasure against the time to come, that you may lay hold on eternal life? The more you receive from God, is your gratitude to him, and your zeal in his service the more enlarged? Amidst your injoyment of his bounty, instead of forgetting him, do your hearts daily ascend in grateful praises to the giver; and do you value still more than these the better blessings of converse with God, and a sense of his favour, and the refined pleasures of heaven? Cannot the affluence of wealth, the flatteries of sense, or the temptations of power, sensualize your hearts, swell them with pride, or excite you to violence and injustice; but are you heavenly, devout, beneficent, and humble? ^p *Do you thus make to yourselves friends of the deceitful Mammon?* Present riches and power will then avail you in the other world; this good improvement of them will intitle you to a larger share of happiness; for the ^q *Servant* who improved ten Pounds was set over ten Cities.

3. As *wealth* or *power* cannot set any above the Judgment of the last day, neither can *poverty* or *meanness* of condition hide any from the observation of the Judge. ^r *All the dead, both small and great, must stand before God; every bond-man and every free.* Let none therefore, on ac-

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^p Luke xvi. 9. ^q xix. 17. ^r Revel. xx. 12.

count of the smallness of their portion here, think they may use it as they please; the *‘Servant who had but one talent committed to him* was called to a reckoning, and because he had not improved it, was *cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth*. God will not indeed examine you as to your use of riches, which you never had, or abuse of power you never possess. It will not be inquired how generous and condescending you have been, and how little attached to the world, who had little temptation to love it. But poor as you are, you are capable of the knowledge and love of God and of Jesus, you have many blessings relating to the present life which deserve your gratitude, and you owe your Creator for making your spirits reasonable and immortal, for redeeming you by his Son, and for the lively hope of a glorious immortality. These blessings you possess in common with others, and these are so valuable, as to make the other distinction of *riches* and *poverty* not worth regarding.

You have not perhaps leisure or abilities for carrying your inquiries into Nature, or your study of Religion, as far as others; but you may *‘know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*; you may believe in and obey him, as well as others; you may live *soberly, righteously, and godly in*
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‘Matt. xxv. 24.

‘John xvii. 3. Tit. ii. 12, 13.

the present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. And you have virtues in a manner *peculiar* to your station, which you may practise to greater advantage than others, and you will be peculiarly examined with regard to these. You may maintain a greater indifference to this world, a more steady regard to, and constant preference of the other, who have little here to attract your desires. You may be temperate, who have fewer temptations to intemperance, and more pressing obligations to be sober. You may be humble, contented with the dispensations of divine Providence, and faithful, and diligent in the discharge of the duties of your station. If you cannot feed the hungry, or cloath the naked, you may be pitiful, courteous, and ready according to your power to help all that come in your way. If you have not so much leisure as others for devotion, you may sanctify conscientiously the *Lord's day*, and take a small portion from every day, in the *Morning* to acknowledge the goodness of God and your dependence, and to commend yourselves to his favour; and in the *Evening* to praise his constant goodness, and unfailing bounty, to implore his forgiveness for the sins of the day, his blessing on your endeavours to perfect holiness, and his protection over you during the night. You may thus preserve
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a constant sense of God, and chearful endeavour to please him, and a lively concern for your happiness in eternity. Though you cannot support a Ministry, you may by your ready attendance and improvement encourage it. Tho' you cannot found Charity Schools, you may educate piously your own children; and tho' you cannot be shining lights to the world, you may be good examples in your own families, and amidst your few acquaintance. Have you not these and various other advantages and abilities for Religion, Virtue, and Usefulness? Are not these valuable trusts, when considered in relation to an eternal state? And can you imagine God will not call you to an account as to your improvement of these, because he has not given you every talent? Be not deceived; you are as much the creatures of God, and the redeemed of the Lord, as the rich; your nature is as capable of holiness and happiness; you must therefore render an account as certainly as others. And the less you have to allure your affections to this world, with the neglect of another, the less excuseable will your neglect of it be, and the more aggravated your condemnation; whom not even the inconveniences, contempt, and sufferings of the present state could stop in pursuing a brutal and sensual happiness, and turn to seek the favour of God, and the honours and happiness of the last day, and of heaven.

Having

Having thus shewn you that there is no good reason for any to hope, they may evade the Tribunal of Christ, not for those who seem to have the fairest plea for it, I need not carry on the proof to other particulars. Let me rather for a conclusion entreat all who hear me, since *every one*, as surely as he now hears me, must hear and obey the call of the Son of God to come to Judgment, and appear before his great Tribunal, to act like a reasonable Being, to consider what is necessary to his being acquitted, and what will bring him into condemnation, and to which of these his present character would subject him. How amazing is the stupid unconcernedness of the generality, who never seriously think of this account, or provide for it! Were it but certain that *twenty* of this Audience would be tried before one of our Judges as to their moral conduct, and all of this number, who should be found from this time forward to the end of the year to have acted unworthy of the Gospel, should be punished with death; how would this alarm every one of us, and put all of us upon reforming our faults with the greatest diligence, lest we should be among the number of the tried and condemned! And will not the certain assurance from the Son of God our Judge, that every one of us must appear before the bar of an impartial, all-knowing, and almighty

mighty Judge, to receive a sentence if we are found wicked; not to a temporal death, but to *everlasting destruction*; will not this awaken you? What can rouse you, if this will not? If a trial at the Tribunal of Christ, if shame and infamy before the whole collection of mankind; if the company of Devils and damned Spirits, "and a *portion in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone*; if these will not fix your attention to provide for the one, and avoid the other, I despair of awakening you by any thing I can offer. With the awakening words of the inspired Apostle I would therefore close this Discourse. *"We labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him, For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terrour of the Lord, we persuade men. Knowing therefore the Terrour of the Lord, as well as his Grace, be you persuaded denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ. * And seeing we look for such things, let us be diligent that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. Amen.*

S E R.

* Revel. xxi. 8. * 2 Cor. v. 9. Tit. ii. 12.
 † 2 Pet. iii. 14.



S E R M O N VII.

Of the Actions for which we shall
be called to an Account.

2 COR. V. 10.

*For we must all appear before the Judgment
Seat of Christ, that every one may receive
the things done in his Body, according to
that he hath done, whether it be good or
bad.*



WE are drawing to the conclu-
sion of this interesting Subject,
may the consideration of it
leave us all more seriously re-
ligious, excite us to be more
useful in life, and prepare us
to be more happy for ever. The more ef-
fectually to answer this purpose, let us pro-
ceed to meditate on the last important truth
contained

contained in these words of the Apostle, on which I proposed to discourse.

V. The *Actions* for which we shall be judged before the great Tribunal. *We must all appear, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* You see we are to be judged for *all* our actions while in the *Body*, or in our state of trial, that were of a moral kind, or capable of being denominated virtuous or vicious. ^a *God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.* And our Judge assures us, that ^b *he searcheth the reins and the heart, and will give to every one of us according to our works.* All the thoughts and actions of a reasonable Being, by which he has advanced or hindered his own virtue and piety, and the virtue and piety of others; and not only what he *has done*, but what he might have done yet *omitted*, shall be considered in the last Judgment. God is perfectly and immutably holy, a lover of righteousness and a hater of iniquity, and is always present with us; sees our inmost thoughts and purposes, as well as our outward actions; knows the advantages for becoming good which we enjoy, our improvement or abuse of these, and the degree of virtue or viciousness there is in our actions, and he cannot forget any one particular. He cannot therefore but
love

^a Eccles. xii. 14.

^b Revel. ii. 23.

love and reward persons, in proportion to the degrees of real goodness which they have attained; or be displeased with and punish them, according to the degrees of their viciousness; and it is therefore evident, that all our thoughts and actions, and all the circumstances which may serve to denominate us of one character or the other, will be considered at the last decisive Judgment. It may be useful to mention some particulars for which we must account, either such as are most important, or which persons are most apt to imagine will escape the notice of God, and the censure of the last day.

I. Our most *secret thoughts, desires, and intentions* will be brought into Judgment, as well as our external actions. St. Paul calls the day of Judgment, *“the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.* And he thus cautions the Corinthians, *“Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the heart: and then shall every good man have praise of God.* And our *“Lord*, who particularly in his Sermon from the Mount, gives laws to the *thoughts and passions* of men, often assures us, that there is *nothing hid* which shall not be brought to light, nor *secret* which shall
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“ Rom. ii. 16. *“* I Cor. iv. 5. *“* Matt. v. 3, 6, 8, 28. Luke xii. 1, 2. Matt. x. 26.

not *be known*. And our own Reason, if we consult it, will abundantly confirm these declarations. The God under whose direction our ideas arise regularly to our view, and who maintains the right order of our minds, must certainly see what passes within them; ^f *for he that teaches man knowledge, shall not be know?* And no operations of our minds can possibly escape his notice, *in whom we live, move, and have our Being*. It is certain also, that all the *morality* of actions, their *merit* or *guiltiness*, their *virtue* or *viciousness*, depends on the ^g *thoughts* and *intentions*. *External* actions are no further objects in themselves of *praise* or *censure*, of *reward* or *punishment*, than as they proceed from a good or evil intention: and if we esteem the proceeding to the external action, to be an augmentation of the virtue or the fault, it is only because this proves the desire or intention to be more strong and established. As therefore God ^h *searcheth our hearts, and trieth our reins, and understandeth our thoughts a far off; is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and loveth truth in the inward parts; he cannot but bring our most secret thoughts and purposes into Judgment at last.*

He is a witness to the *secret piety* of the devout, to the ardour of their gratitude and
love,

^f Psal. xciv. 10. ^g Matt. xv. 18. ^h Jer. xvii. 10. Psal. cxxxix. i. li. 6.

for which we shall be judged. 177

love, the earnestness of their desires to resemble him in holiness and goodness, their inward abhorrence of sin, and ingenuous sorrow for having committed it, and to the fervour of their desires and prayers for the happiness of their fellow-creatures, as well as to the outward actions, the fruits of those dispositions. ⁱ *Their heavenly Father seeth in secret, and will reward them openly.* And where the external action, or effect, or success, were prevented by things out of their power, they shall be rewarded according to the warmth and strength of their desires and purposes, not according to their success. ^k *If there be a willing mind, they will be accepted, and rewarded, according to what they have, not according to what they have not.* Not one good desire or design, which meerly for want of opportunity did not appear in act, or which properly terminated between God and the soul, and could not appear to men, shall pass unrewarded by God. The principal and most valuable part of Religion, peculiarly so called, consists of the secret thoughts and affections of the heart, which can only be known unto God. The less knowledge men have of our devout affections, the less influence can a regard to them be supposed to have on the mind; the less possibility is there of any mean views, and the

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ⁱ Matt. vi. 6.

^k 2 Cor. viii. 12.

more room for a genuine unaffected piety, and for a large reward. And what an encouragement is this to an uniform fervent piety, and an unsullied purity of heart? It is now our greatest excellence and happiness, and it shall appear at last to the whole world to have been our wisdom, and qualify us for a divine and never ending felicity.

And as this doctrine yields the most solid comfort to the truly devout, it speaks equal terrour to the formal, impure, or negligent professor of Religion, and to the secretly wicked. God is not to be deceived by an outward devotion, and a bodily attendance on his worship. He sees when ¹ *the heart is far from him*, he sees the want of a sincere and prevailing love to him, through all their professions of esteem and devotion. He sees the coldness of their hearts, and their insensibility to his goodness, while perhaps they are offering him the highest praises for the greatest benefits. He sees the want of a thorough compunction of soul, of a real abhorrence of their sins, and hearty resolutions against them, when they are in the most humble manner acknowledging their offences before him. Their performing the external actions, without correspondent affections within, will be regarded by him as solemn mockery;

¹ Matt. xv. 8.

mockery; and the *portion of hypocrites* is in Scripture represented as the most dreadful. Why should I then *mock with God*, when I can only *deceive myself*, and incense him? With what serious attention of mind, with what devotion of heart, should I worship God, whether in publick, or secret, since God discerneth my secret soul, and will judge me for its most secret motions! What an influence would this thought have upon me to cure the levity of my mind, and rouse me out of all trifling and formality, that *God will judge the secrets of all men by Jesus Christ*? I should be ashamed and awakened to attention, if I thought a serious christian saw the vanity of my heart; and shall not the thought, that my Judge sees it, and will reckon with me for it, make me ashamed and afraid to indulge it?

What terrour also does this truth speak to all the secretly wicked! You impose perhaps on men by the appearance of great piety, sanctity, humility, and justice, while you are really in secret profane, lewd, proud or unjust. You laugh to think how easily you cheat others, obtain the esteem due to real worth, and injoy in private the pleasures and profits of wickedness, and think yourselves mighty wise, for being thus able to separate the sin from the punishment. Or you flatter yourselves, that be-

cause these dispositions do not break out into open actions, that you shall therefore pass as unobserved by God, as by men; and that his forbearance with you is a sign of his indifference. But what folly is this? When the concealed wickedness of some, and the secret piety and virtue of others are one principal reason of God's appointing a day of *manifestation*, and righteous Judgment, that justice may be done to both before all. Your secret and successful wickedness is a reason, why your Governour and Judge, to whom your conduct appears without disguise, should call you to an account, and punish you publicly. Our ^m Lord informs us the guilt of *adultery*, *murder*, and the like crimes, may be contracted, where the external action is never produced; and thus render us odious in the eye of God, lose us the happiness and reward of the pure, and subject us to the publick infamy and condemnation of the last day. Nothing but repentance and inward amendment can prevent this; and nothing but *internal* sanctity commend us to that *omniscient* Being, who is a *Spirit*, and a constant witness to whatever passes within our spirits.

Again; how careful should this make us as to the *simplicity* of our *intentions*, where they are in part right; that no corrupt designs insinuate themselves, and mixing

for which we shall be judged. 181

ing with the good defile the heart. God sees not only that part of our intention which is agreeable to him, but the whole soul; how far love to him and concern to please him sways us, and how far we are influenced by a regard to men, and to our reputation, in religious worship; how far true charity goes in determining us to give alms; and how far the desire of glory from men. Foolishly partial to ourselves we may fix our regard only on what is laudable in our affections and designs; but what will it avail to impose upon ourselves, when we cannot hide the whole truth from God? Let us therefore search and trie our hearts, and beg God to *search us, and try us*, and show us ourselves; and *if there be any wicked way in us* to convince and reclaim us, and *to lead us in the way everlasting*.

Finally; this should give a check to the *vanity*, and *levity*, of our thoughts, when they are not directly criminal, that God sees us now, and will judge us for them at last. We should perhaps be ashamed that persons of judgment and piety should know how triflingly and childishly our thoughts are often imployed; and can we help asking ourselves, how they will bear the inspection of God. Are they such as become reasonable and immortal beings, capable of the imployments and pleasures of devotion,

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Pfal. cxxxix. 23, 24.

devotion, of knowledge and friendship, and of entertaining themselves with the prospects and joys of eternity? Will my Judge, when he appears, think this waste of thought and time, this trifling turn of mind, excusable in one whom *he died to redeem to himself, to be holy, peculiar, and zealous of good works?* The mind I allow must at times be unbent, and such amusements and diversions, as serve to recruit its strength, and fit it to discharge its great work with chearful vigour, answer valuable purposes, and will bear the inspection of our Judge: but it is as plain we should avoid that trifling turn of mind, which indisposes us for any important affair, weakens and dissipates the mind. Let us therefore establish ourselves in the belief of this great truth, and make it familiar to our minds, that when we are most concealed from men, yea, from all creatures, that we are then open to the eye of God; may approve ourselves to him by the piety, purity, and benevolence of our intentions and affections, or displease him by a contrary temper; may secure the honours, or incur the publick condemnation of the great day.

2. Our *words* shall be brought into Judgment. This is not considered as it ought to be by the generality, who allow themselves such a liberty in talking, as if this

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was their sentiment, *our* ^P *tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?* They are inclined to think, what is so soon formed, so soon gone, and so soon forgotten, by themselves at least, as their words, will not be regarded by God, or remembered at last. The Gospel of Christ therefore frequently inculcates this important truth upon us. What can be more express and awful than this determination of our Lord the great Judge? ^Q *I say unto you, that every idle* (or as it appears from the context the Greek should be rendered) *every injurious and malicious word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.* ^r *L* *ys* particularly, one chief sort of offenders with the tongue, are commonly joined with some of the worst finners, and included in the threatenings of final condemnation. And there is the greatest reason why our words should be considered and brought into Judgment, as well as what we call our actions. For they serve as ^t *truly* to denominate our internal character, and oftentimes better shew it, than our actions; as they escape us before we are aware, and give us not time to dissemble: and they have as real effects upon others, their hap-

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^P Psal. xii. 4. ^Q Matt. xii. 36, 37. ^r Revel. xxi. 8, 27. xxii. 15. ^t Mat. xii. 34.

pinels or misery as our actions. Excepting therefore the case of promises or threatenings, there is but little reason to distinguish words from actions. Blessing God with the mouth is as much an act of piety, as kneeling before him. The comforting another by friendly and pious conversation, is as much an act of charity and friendship, as with our hands removing what hurted his body. And the afflicting or injuring another, by unkind, malicious, or corrupt speeches, is as much an evil action, as wounding his body and giving him pain. A *false witness* may take away life or mony as effectually as a *murderer* or *robber*; and a *slanderer* ruin a man's credit, and with that his subsistence, as effectually as if he spoiled him by violence. I may instill the principles of Religion and Virtue into another, or corrupt him, by my words, as really and effectually as by my example and actions; it is not therefore strange that a righteous God should judge us for them. The more quick therefore the motions of the tongue, and the more difficult it is to govern them, the more reason there is for frequently inculcating this truth, that *by our words we shall be justified, or by our words condemned.*

Was this thoroughly believed and considered, what a happy change would it produce in conversation, and in the commerce of the world; and for want of its being so,
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for which we shall be judged. 185

how many evils prevail; so many, that it is hard to say whether upon the whole speech, as it is ordinarily used, be more a blessing than a curse. *'The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity; it defileth the whole body, setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.* What a severe, but what a just description is this of the abuse of speech. To prevent our conversation from being chargeable with this guilt, let us frequently meditate on the account we must give of our words. This will not only restrain us from all *lying*, from all *impure* and *malicious* conversation; from every word that would injure the virtue, peace, or welfare of our neighbour; and most of all from whatever would manifest a contempt of the supream Majesty, as *common swearing, profane cursing* and the like; but will also excite us to imploy this noble gift of our Creator, in a manner some way worthy the design of the giver. It will ingage us to bear in company, not only an innocent, but an useful part; will cut off the *impertinences*, as well as the *abuses* of speech; and ingage us to communicate sentiments which may increase the knowledge, animate the virtue and piety, lighten the sorrows, and improve the rational satisfactions of those with whom we converse; at least innocently entertain and relieve them, amidst

1 James iii. 6.

amidst the fatigues, and cares, and vexations that attend this mortal life. Nothing that might betray in ourselves, or produce in others, a loose, a profane, or malicious temper, would ever escape from those, who know and consider they must shortly give an account of their discourse. *" Their speech will be always with grace, or amiable and benevolent, seasoned with salt ; and such as may minister advantage to the hearers.*

How little do they who most need this consideration, attend to the account they must give of their words unto God. How many make no scruple of inventing, or lightly taking up, and industriously spreading calumnies, by which friendships are dissolved, the quiet of families broken, the reputation and usefulness of the well-deserving ruined, the modest and innocent pierced to the heart, and disguests, quarrels, uncharitableness, and injuries every where multiplied. How many who indulge themselves in such practices, have yet the face to put themselves off for *good persons*, because perhaps they scruple picking a pocket, or committing lewdness. But *" the judgment of God, against those who commit these things, is always according to truth.* Where this abuse of speech is equally mischievous to society, and discovers equal malignity of heart, with other vices which all agree to brand as
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most guilty, it will receive from a righteous God an equal condemnation, and should therefore be with equal care avoided by us. The *Liar* who quite perverts the use of speech, the mutual communication of sentiments, knowledge, and truth, must therefore with reason expect the condemnation so often threatened to him in Scripture; they from whose mouths flow *filthy and corrupt communication*, must expect to be excluded from the * *heavenly Jerusalem, into which nothing that defileth can enter*: and as for the dealers in profane *oaths and curses*, (could I suspect there were any such among my Audience) I would assure them, that they must soon appear before a God, whose majesty and authority they will find much too sacred to be trifled with; and suffer a *damnation* too dreadful to be wantonly imprecated on their own heads, or on others; unless a bitter repentance and an intire reformation prevent it.

3. *Omissions of duty* will be inquired into, considered, and punished, as well as *actual sins*. Too many content themselves with a *negative* righteousness. They are not profane, intemperate, or unjust, and therefore they hope to come off well at last, though they neglect to cultivate a pious and divine temper, and though they are without charity to the necessitous, and unconcerned for the

* Revel. xxi. 27.

the happiness of their fellow-creatures. In direct opposition to the hopes of such persons, our Lord relates the transactions of the last day, Matt. xxv. 41. — in which relation, the condemnation of men for *actual sins* is not mentioned, because the guilty in these could not hope to escape, when *omissions* of doing good were sentenced to so great a punishment. *Then shall he say to them on his left hand, depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not.* Nor is there any thing strange or severe in this procedure. Sins of *omission* may be so circumstanced, as to be more guilty than many sins of *commission*. A person situated advantageously for the knowledge and the love of God, for retirement and devotion, and who, neglecting to improve this situation, indulges an earthly sensual spirit, may be more criminal than one, who through great ignorance of God falls into cursing and swearing; as he manifests a more inexcusable disregard to God, and contempt of his favour, the value of which he knew or might have so easily known. The omission of an act of charity to a person in extreme distress, by one capable of relieving him, may have ten times the inhumanity

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nity and guilt in it, of an injury done to another, by one under a sudden and violent passion.

Let me think seriously of this. I cannot perhaps charge myself with profaneness, and open contempt of God, and of his worship, but have I not omitted numberless opportunities for attaining a clearer apprehension, and firmer belief of his Perfections and Providence, a more frequent gratitude and habitual devotedness to him? Have I not sacrificed many opportunities of this kind, if not to criminal indulgences, yet to mean and trifling amusements? Have I not too often *restrained prayer* before God? Hath every Morning stately a witness to fresh favours from God, been witness to fresh acts of gratitude and love to him? Have I been constant and faithful in secret duties, which are absolutely necessary to maintain the divine life in vigour, and to prepare me for an acceptable discharge of the other duties of the christian life? I have not perhaps knowingly injured others, or seduced them to vice, but have I not omitted many favourable opportunities for doing them good, either in their body, mind, or reputation? And have I abounded in instances of generosity and charity, as I have abounded in riches? *The grace of God appeared to teach me, not only to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, but to live soberly,*

soberly, righteously, and godly, looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of Christ. My Judge commands me not only to ^v *abstain from all appearance of evil*, but to love the Lord my God with all my heart, and soul, and strength, and my neighbour as myself. Am I not therefore obliged, as I would not knowingly incur the condemnation of the last day, to improve every opportunity and advantage granted me for the increasing in the knowledge and love of God, and in every virtue?

Allied to this is the next particular.

4. We must be judged as to our *improvement or waste* of the abilities and advantages for doing good which we have possessed, and rewarded or punished accordingly. But of this, and what remains on this important Subject, I shall treat in my next Discourse.

^v 1 Theff. v. 22. Luke x. 27, 28.





S E R M O N VIII.

Of the Actions for which we shall
be called to an Account.

2 C O R. V. 10.

For we must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.



HAVE made a considerable progress in treating the last important truth I observed in this account which St. Paul gives of a future general Judgment, viz. its taking cognisance of *all our thoughts and actions* of a moral kind, while we live in these bodies, on our trial for eternity. I have shown, that our most *secret thoughts, desires, and intentions* will be brought to light, and our character and state be in a great measure determined by them; that our *words* also will be brought into Judgment;
and

and that it will be inquired, what good we have *omitted* to do, for which we had ability and opportunity. I now proceed to another particular subject of inquiry allied to this.

4. We must be judged at last as to our *improvement* or *waste* of our *talents*, that is, of the abilities and means of doing good which we have possessed, and rewarded or punished accordingly. This our Lord the Judge inculcates with the greatest clearness and strength in the two ^a *Parables* of the *pounds*, and of the *talents*, committed by a Lord to his servants. He who *improved ten pounds* well, was *set over ten cities*; he who managed *five* well, over *five cities*; while he who *napkined* up his, though he did not waste it, was *cast into outer darkness, where is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth*. The generality instead of regarding the *talents* in their hands, as excitements to a chearful diligence, and trusts which will increase their account, are apt to regard them as an excuse for sloth and negligence. They enjoy, it may be, the advantages of a religious education, and the best instructions for holiness and happiness, and are surrounded with the fewest temptations to vice, yet content themselves with such mean attainments in piety and goodness, as it would be even difficult

^a Luke xix. 12. Matt. xxv. 14.

difficult for them not to reach; with escaping the grosser pollutions of the world, while they make not a proficiency in holiness and in the divine life, in any measure proportioned to the advantages which they enjoy. When they might and ought to live in a constant delightful intercourse of veneration, love, gratitude, dependence, and resignation towards God, and receiving from him peculiar marks of his gracious presence, and special approbation, they content themselves with a devotion that is scarce warm enough to be term'd *living*. Others think their wealth, and those easy and affluent circumstances wherein they are placed by God, and the larger share they have of his bounties, an excuse from a diligent attendance on his worship, a lively gratitude to him, an active zeal in his service, a humble sense of their dependence upon him, and a serious concern to improve his gifts agreeably to his intention in bestowing them: but such persons should know and consider, that *b to whom he hath given much, of them he will ask the more*; that inferior degrees of piety, charity, zeal, and usefulness, will be accepted and rewarded in others, than are necessary for their salvation. A man who has but *half a talent*, if he improves it, and presents *one* to his Lord, shall be owned as a faithful servant and rewarded; while he who was intrusted with

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* Luke xiii. 48.

ten talents, if he returns but *ten*, will have the doom of the unprofitable servant. And there is the greatest reason and equity in this procedure.

Have I then a clearer knowledge and more worthy apprehensions of God than others, and opportunities for rising to the most just and lovely conceptions of him, and of his dispensations to mankind? I will endeavour to rise to a love and devotedness to God answerable to these, and not look with contempt on one of lower attainments, who perhaps has improved his single talent better than I have done my five, and made further advances in real goodness, proper allowance being given for his difficulties and disadvantages. Have I time upon my hands uningaged by the troublesome cares of life, and the provision for a present subsistence? Instead of wasting this in amusements and pleasures, which will sensualize my soul, vitiate my taste for true happiness, and unfit me for the satisfactions of virtue and devotion, I will rejoice in the goodness of God, who hath thus put it into my power to anticipate on earth the pleasures of heaven; and apply myself more constantly to that [reading, meditation, prayer and praise, which will yield me the most clear and constant sight of God, transform me more into his image, and give me the greatest relish and enjoyment of those satisfactions, the most abundant

abundant and perfect injoyment of which constitutes a principal part of the happiness of heaven. If I do not thus act, I shall have just reason to fear I may be forever excluded from it; who preferred any pleasures before it, and was only solicitous for so much Religion as I hoped would save me from hell.

Am I rich in this world? I will consider my wealth, not merely as the means of leading a luxurious and splendid life, like that of the rich man in the *parable*, lest I share his doom; but I will consider riches as given me by God, to qualify me to be happy like God in doing good, in giving ease to the pained, supplies to the necessitous, and joy and comfort to the distressed: I will as attentively seek out, and as readily embrace opportunities for this, as the voluptuous do opportunities for indulging their senses: and then whereas their pleasures perish in the using, and are followed with a dreadful reckoning, and a heavy condemnation for abusing the gifts of God, the pleasure I now take in doing good will prepare me to be perfectly happy in that world, where I shall see good and happiness abound to all who are fit to be happy; and I shall hear from my most benevolent Redeemer and Judge that transporting sentence, which will fix my happiness for eternity, *Well done, good and faithful servant.*

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Every ability, capacity, or opportunity, for becoming pious and useful, is a trust, the value of which our great Governor perfectly knows, and for which he will call us to a strict account. Let us therefore often examine ourselves, whether we have made that improvement of our understanding, wealth, and influence, in works of piety and charity, which becomes those, who must be judged by a Lord, who when he lived upon earth ^d *went about doing good*, exerting himself to the utmost for the honour of God and the happiness of mankind, and who when doing good filled up the whole day, took a great part of the ^e *night* for devotion, was *straitned* till his work was accomplished, and readily offered up his life to finish it. Can I hope that this Judge will approve me, if instead of imitating him herein, I give myself up to sensual and selfish indulgences, manifest a contempt for his example, and for the ends which he pursued, and for that immortal glory and happiness to which he hath thus shewn me the way? How many opportunities, and what large treasures of heavenly bliss, which the best improvement of these would have secured, have I lost irrecoverably? I will double my diligence for the future, the work is excellent, the assistances promised are divine, and the reward is infinite;

^d Acts x. 38.

^e Luke v. 16. vi. 12. xii. 50.

for which we shall be judged. 197

nite; ^f *I will be stedfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as I know that my labour is not in vain in the Lord.* I will value the continuance of my life, as the continuance of opportunities for rising to a more exalted piety and holiness; an increase of wealth, as an increase of the capacity and means of doing good, of imitating the divine benevolence and injoying the godlike satisfactions of communicating happiness; that so when my Lord comes he may say unto me, *Thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

5. We shall be accountable for the *influence* our actions have had upon others, and the *sins* into which we have led them. If we endeavour to improve well our influence over others, and to form and excite them to piety and virtue, we have this to comfort and encourage us, that should our best endeavours prove unsuccessful to them, we ourselves shall by no means lose our reward. What the *Prophet* speaks in the person of Christ, is applicable to all who sincerely endeavour to promote the same design. ^g *Though Israel be not gathered, yet I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.* Ill success may approve our constancy and devotedness to the work, and heighten our virtue; and then instead of

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^f Cor. xv. 58.

^g Isai. lxix. 5.

lessening it shall increase the splendour of our crown, and the value of our reward. Scarce any in appearance could be more unsuccessful than our Lord, while he conversed upon earth, tho' none more able, wise, zealous, and faithful; and none are so *glorious in the eyes of God* as he. This therefore should mightily incourage us in doing good, or endeavouring it.

And the consideration that we must answer for the ill influence of our actions upon others, which we might easily have foreseen and prevented, should make us very cautious to avoid all sinful practices, and all appearance of evil. ^h *Whosoever, saith our Judge, shall offend, or cause to fall, one of those little ones who believe in me, it were better for him, that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.* And St. Paul from a regard to the day of Judgment exhorts us, not to ⁱ *use our liberty to the scandal or fall of others, not to destroy with our meat one for whom Christ died; since we must all give an account of ourselves unto God.* How circumspect therefore should persons of rank and character and influence be, lest by the force of their example they fatally draw others to vice and ruin. Sins which terminate on myself may be expiated by a sincere repentance thro' the blood of Christ; but how shall I be purged from
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^a Matt. xviii. 6.

ⁱ Rom. xiv. 12—16.

the guilt of those sins by which I have ruined others; when perhaps I cannot know all whom I have fatally influenced, or it is out of my power to repair the injury done them? O righteous God, how will they be able to bear the weight of their sins, and of their punishment! And what terroure does this speak to all of this character, who not only by conversation and example pervert those who live with them, corrupting the principles and morals of the age, being men of wit and figure, but who by their profane or lewd writings convey the infection down to posterity, and draw numbers into perdition after they themselves have left the stage, and are receiving their just punishment of their aggravated guilt! Who would prefer the vain reputation of men of uncommon wit and penetration, or the profits of a well seasoned piece of vice and profaneness, before the favour of almighty God, their own great obligations to him, and their happiness to eternity, and the everlasting happiness of numbers, not only their contemporaries, but for several succeeding ages? They who thus act the part of Tempters, of Devils, and incur their guilt, ** will be cast into the fire prepared for the Devil and his angels*, and resemble them in misery, as they have done in wickedness. In my publick actions therefore, I will not only consider them as they

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* Matt. xxv. 41. Revel. xix. 20.

relate to God and to myself, but their *probable* consequences with regard to others; and never for the sake of any pleasure or profit do an action, which may in any degree disappoint an end for which the Son of God became incarnate and died, as I would not be condemned by him at last.

This Subject offers us various practical Reflections; I will take notice of three or four, and conclude.

1. What considerate person but must be amazed at the gross *negligence* of the generality, in relation to their moral conduct! Who that observed them could easily believe they were reasonable and immortal Beings on their trial for eternity, capable of rising to the perfection of goodness and of happiness for everlasting; and liable to fall thro' a disregard to their conduct into everlasting perdition; and that every action of their lives would be brought into Judgment? Were they to die like the *brutes*, were their actions to be forever *forgotten*, and they *nothing* after death, could they be more regardless of the laws of God, and less careful to avoid sin, to practise their duty, and improve their opportunities for piety and goodness, than they are? What a fatal stupidity and infatuation is this! Not one of you who hear me, but within a few years at most must be removed hence by death, and after death be brought to Judgment. Whether you think of it, or
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not, provide against it or not, appear you must, and be judged. It is not more certain that you now live reasonable and free creatures, that you hear and know the will of God, than that he will call you to account for your conduct, your private and publick, your personal and relative behaviour, as Parents or Children, Masters or Servants. You shall be examined as to your piety towards God, your faith and love to Jesus, your justice and charity to others, and your sobriety and purity in regard to yourselves. You know this to be the unalterable appointment of almighty God, who has given you full assurance that his Son shall judge the world, by raising him from the dead. What stronger assurance would you have? And what is there in life equally important for you to mind? One would think on the first serious consideration of this great truth, *that we must all soon be judged and sentenced for eternity*, persons should lay aside all their thoughts, concerns, and pursuits, and apply themselves wholly to this great concern, untill they were heartily engaged in that course of life which their Judge will approve; and should endeavour with their greatest care to preserve themselves in it thro' remaining life. And yet is it not visible, there is nothing relating to them that is less regarded by the generality? My Friends, this negligence and folly admit of no excuse. You know you must

must be judged ; I repeat it again from the Word of God, *He will bring every work into Judgment, with every secret thing* — Be you regardless of your Actions, of his Laws, and of the last Judgment, at your peril.

2. Will every *thought* and *action* be brought into Judgment? This should teach us an *habitual seriousness and circumspection* in our conduct, and make us attentive to the whole of it, since God now attends to it, and Christ will judge us for it. Could we hide our thoughts or actions from the divine inspection, or evade the inquiry of the last day, we might have some plausible excuse for trifling, and for thoughtlessness as to the present virtue or viciousness of our actions, and their future consequences ; but since we cannot, why should we neglect them? Shutting our eyes will not remove the danger, nor forgetting our Judge prevent his coming to Judgment. It may indeed be painful at first to maintain an habitual circumspection, and a constant regard to a future state ; to consider before every deliberate and doubtful action, whether it be agreeable to the laws of Christ, and will stand his inquiry at last ; it will restrain many a favourite passion, and dash some darling joys, and will require labour and struggling with ourselves — But then consider, it is *absolutely necessary*, eternity depends upon it ; and the rewards of fidelity, of serious diligence, and fervent devotion
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thro' eternity, will infinitely overpay a moment's labour. And did we accustom ourselves *every Evening* seriously to review our temper and conduct, as under the divine observation now, and soon to be judged by his Son; and endeavour to obtain his pardon for what we found amiss, by a sincere repentance and effectual resolutions of amendment; this practice would naturally form us to an habitual caution not to offend, and a steady concern to please God; would soon keep us from doing what would make the thought of a future Judgment burdensome to us; and conscious to a sincere and prevailing concern to please God, we should rejoice to think that we acted under his observation, who was a lover of goodness and piety, and who would not suffer one sincerely good desire, purpose, or endeavour to pass unrewarded.

When we have made this practice habitual, the advantage we shall find in being restrained from every irregular pursuit, and saved from the shame and pain of frequent guilty reflections, the growing satisfactions we should enjoy in the prospect of the glorious coming of our Judge, the rational hope of being approved by him, transported with his smiles and made everlastingly happy by his sentence, these satisfactions and hopes will more than make us amends at present, for all we should lose or suffer by this constant regard to a future Judgment. We may enjoy
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the satisfactions of knowledge and truth, of divine love, of a generous friendship, of a temperate and rational use of the bounties of Providence, and of improving these to the pleasures of an extensive benevolence, and a noble gratitude to God; these pleasures we may freely enjoy, even under constant apprehensions of a final Judgment; yea, the more we regarded it, to the more advantage should we enjoy these satisfactions. We should not then, in order to be quiet within, be reduced to the wretched shift of forgetting that we are *mortal* and *accountable*; and of overlooking the danger of perishing forever, instead of providing against it, and avoiding it. Our delights would not be embittered by the frequent fears and forebodings of death; which in spite of all our art, the sicknesses and calamities of life that we see or suffer, and the frequent deaths of our acquaintance, will force upon us. And then by this habitual regard to a future Judgment we shall have this further advantage, that we may always have some great and worthy design in hand, even the design of our own immortal perfection and felicity, which we may always advance. And while time and the like are loads upon others, we shall be disposed to improve them for the purposes of virtue, devotion, and for the interests of eternity; ends only worthy of immortal minds, our success as to which will

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will abundantly compensate us for all the labour and circumspection of a life most strictly pious ; and which if we now neglect them, will force themselves upon our attention at last, and furnish matter for the most severe and despairing reflections.

Were there a time when God did not regard us, were there a criminal liberty or indulgence for which he would not call us to a reckoning, we might then give up the reins to frolick mirth, and unthinking gayety ; but since God is always present, and always attentive, can we ever think it reasonable to be unattentive ?

3. Must we be accountable for all our faults, and for all our injoyments ? This consideration should make us easie under the different dispensations of Providence to us, and our different conditions in the world. Were this life the whole of our existence, there might be some reason to complain of the *inequality* of our portions in it ; or were our future state to be determined by our present external circumstances : but when this life is only a state of trial for another, and the trial lasts but for a day, in comparison of the duration of the blessedness which will reward our behaving well ; and when the inquiry at last will be, not what was our former station or character, but how we acted our parts, we can have little pretence to complain.

plain. They who are in the straitest worldly circumstances, and shut out from all the luxury and grandeur of this life, are yet equally capable of attaining the favour of God, the glories of the last day, and the blessedness of heaven, with the greatest and richest. You who are poor, may be pious, just, humble, compassionate, resigned; you may live with a continual regard to God, under a sense of his favourable presence with you, and cheered with the prospect of immortal blessedness, to which you are every hour drawing nearer; and have you then reason to complain, merely because another acts his part in finer cloths, with more attendants, and the like for a day? The wisdom of God appointed your circumstances, and placed you in those which he saw you best able to improve; instead then of wishing you had been in others, and thinking how you would then have behaved, think that infinite wisdom knows what is best for you, and cheerfully comply with the designs of infinite goodness.

What signifies it whether you are a Servant or a Master, poor or rich, famous or unknown for a few hours, when you have before you an eternity, wherein it is in your power to be happy to the extent of your faculties, to be rich with the treasures of God, and to be glorious in the esteem and friendship of Angels and Saints? The distinctions and possessions for which you are apt to envy others,
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are trusts which they are obliged to improve, and for which they are to account; and their abuse of these, which is perhaps the thing at which you repine, and for which you envy them, will but increase their eternal condemnation and misery.

Let not the poor then *envy* the rich, nor the rich *despise* the poor; for another world, for eternity God hath set them on a level; and all have it in their power to raise themselves as advantageously as they can desire. Instead therefore of being solicitous about external circumstances, let us apply ourselves every one to the best discharge of our duties, to the best improvement of our stations, and of the talents which we possess.

Or has God taken wealth from us? We cannot indeed enjoy it for a few remaining hours, be liberal with it, and the like; but we may be patient, resigned, heavenly; we may never the less secure the favour of God and the blessedness of heaven; and is the loss worth regarding? The person who acts the *Hero* oppressed with evils, and falling at last under them, if he act well his part, is as greatly honoured and rewarded, as if he had represented *successful* virtue; nay more, if his part had more difficulty in it, and he performed it better. Leave it then cheerfully to God to determine your characters in life, as to wealth or poverty, honour or obscurity, health or sickness; and let it be your
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only concern to act well the part he assigns you, to fill well the relations in which you are placed, and to improve your advantages for virtue, piety, and life eternal. This is in your power, and thus to render yourselves glorious and happy forever; and is it then of great importance, whether your day of trial was bright or cloudy, stormy or calm?

4. This consideration that every *thought* and *action* will be brought into Judgment, should make us humble under a conviction of our manifold sins and defects; and teach us to value our privilege by the Gospel, that we shall be judged by the *Son of God* who was also the *Son of man*, and rewarded thro' his *merits*, who will ¹ *esteem himself* rewarded in our happiness. Who is there of us, but after a serious review of his temper and conduct, under the apprehension of the final Judgment, must see reason to cast himself with the deepest humility before the Mercy-Seat, and to cry out, ^m “ *Enter not into Judgment with thy servant, O Lord, for I cannot answer thee for one of a thousand!*” We have sinned in thought, in word, and in deed, have omitted our duty, and been idle and slothful servants. What a relief is it under a sense of our sins, that our Judge is our Saviour and Friend; who ⁿ *was partaker of flesh and blood*, and lived upon earth, that he might

¹ John xvii. 1—3, 20—24.
ⁿ Hebr. ii. 14.

^m Ps. cxliii. 2.

might have a feeling of our infirmities, and of the difficulties and temptations with which we are compassed, and make every favourable allowance for them ! And that he hath by his unparalleled devotedness to his Father's honour, and condescending love to Mankind, by his ° *perfect obedience* unto death, recovered for our imperfect race the *grant of immortality* ; in which the meanest sincere Christian may enjoy a happiness equal to his desires and capacities, and infinitely exceeding his best deserts ! It is certain, the *Merit* of Christ, great as it is, can be no cover for the impenitence and continued wickedness of any one sinner, for obstinate idleness and unfaithfulness. An all-knowing God must see every person and character to be what they really are in themselves, and can never suppose the character or obedience of Christ to be ours ; and for the same reason that he loved the holiness and obedience of the Man Christ Jesus, he must be displeased with and reject us, if we are unholy and disobedient. Notwithstanding all that Christ has done and suffered, a wise and holy God cannot but approve and demand our *personal* obedience and devotedness to him ; nay, more indispensibly require it, on account of the expence he has been at, by the example in flesh, and by the sufferings and death of his own Son, to form us to a tem-

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° Rom. v. 12—21. 1 Cor. xv. 22. Philip. ii. 8.

per and life like his ; and the more be displeased with and condemn us, if we continue unlike to him ; and finally reward or punish us according to the degrees of our conformity, or opposition. But this is our unspeakable happiness, that when God rewards the sincere piety and obedience of a short life, he will reward it, not according to its *imperfection*, which at best would intitle us to a low degree of happiness, but according to the *riches of his Grace* in giving his Son to death for us, and according to the greatness of his love to his Son, and the perfection and acceptableness of his obedience ; who esteems himself rewarded, and is greatly happy in his power to make his faithful servants happy. Infinite is this happiness to be for ever enjoyed in those *Mansions*, which *Christ is now preparing for us*, which will be finally distributed among his Saints, according to their greater or less resemblance to their glorious head, and their zeal and diligence in doing good. ^p *Eternal life is the gift of God thro' Jesus Christ our Lord*, and the reward of a *patient continuance in well-doing* ^q. Let us not therefore *be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord ; and be faithful to the death, since he will give us the crown of life eternal*.

With this Exhortation let me conclude the Reflections, which offer themselves, when we

^p Rom. vi. 23. ii. 7. ^q Rom. xii. 11. Rev. ii. 10.

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we consider the extent of the last Judgment to every *thought* and *action*, which is the last important Truth contained in St. *Paul's* words, that I proposed to consider.

With this also I should have concluded these Discourses on a future Judgment, but it may with reason be inquired, what will be the *consequences* of our undergoing this impartial and unerring Judgment? What are the *rewards* which will be conferred on those, who shall be then approved by the Son of God? And what the *punishments* which the guilty creatures must suffer, who are condemned by him? I will answer these questions as nearly as I can in the words of divine Revelation, and thus close these Discourses on this most interesting Subject.

Their trial being ended, *the Judge shall say unto them on his right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from before the foundation of the world. He will confess them before his Father, and before his holy Angels. The righteousness, faith, and patience of the Saints shall obtain praise and honour, and glory, even praise from God; and he will render glory, honour, and immortality to a patient continuance in well-doing. To qualify them for injoying all the happiness, which can be expected from the unbounded muni-*

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¹ Matt. xxv. 34. x. 32. Luke xii. 8. 1 Pet.
i. 7. 1 Cor. iv. 5. Rom. ii. 7.

ficence of the greatest and best of Beings; their Bodies which are now ^f vile; shall by the mighty power of God be changed, and fashioned like unto Christ's own most glorious body; so that the righteous shall shine forth as the Sun in the kingdom of their Father; possessing bodies glorious, powerful, spiritual, incorruptible, and immortal; and their ^t Spirits shall be made perfect in knowledge, goodness, and devotion; for that which is in part shall be done away, and that which is perfect shall come. They shall reside ^u with Christ in Paradise, the abode of every thing that is beautiful and pleasing; and in the heavenly Jerusalem, where every thing abounds that is grand and splendid; in that City which hath glorious foundations, whose builder and maker is God. There they shall for ever enjoy the immediate presence of God and of Jesus; shall see God, and behold the Redeemer face to face; for the City hath no need of the Sun, neither of the Moon to shine in it; but the glory of God lightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. There they shall be kings and priests unto God for ever and ever. There God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain, for the former things are passed away; and He that

siteth

^f Phil. iii. 21. Matt. xiii. 43. ⁱ Cor. xv. 42.
^t Heb. xii. 23. ⁱ Cor. xiii. 8. ^u Luke xxiii. 43.
Rev. xxii. 1. xxi. 1. ⁱ John iii. 2. Rev. v. 10.

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siteth upon the Throne will make all things new. There shall in no wise enter into the holy city any thing that defileth; * righteousness alone dwelleth in the new heavens and the new earth. There the greatest and most beautiful truths in continual succession shall entertain and exalt the understanding, the clearest and largest views of the perfections, works, and dispensations of the infinite all-perfect Mind, shall continually ennoble, transport, and make them happy; make them like unto God, when they see him face to face, and know also as they are known. In consequence of this they serve him day without night for ever and ever, love and obey him in perfection; and are thus ever supremely happy, being ever proper objects of the divine approbation and their own. They are also ^y with Christ, and behold his glory, in those Mansions which his love is now preparing for them; and to which all the grandeur and beauty of this world, their Scene of trial is but as the Scaffolding to the Palace, to be thrown aside when the other is finished. ^z There with a gratitude and love worthy of his redeemed, worthy the just conceptions they will then have of his native greatness, amazing condescension and dying love, and of the value of the happiness to which he hath introduced them, with the millions of his redeemed, with
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* 2 Pet. iii. 13. ^y John xiv. 2, 3. xvii. 24.
^z Rev. v. 9. xiv. I. xix. I.

golden harps and heavenly songs, in extasies of gratitude, joy, wonder, and devotion, they shall *ascribe glory and honour, salvation, blessing and praise, to him that siteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.* They shall enter into the most intimate friendships and improving conversations, with those exalted, glorious, wise, holy, and benevolent Beings the *Angels*; who will delight, as they formerly revealed to ^a *Daniel* and to *St. John*, the schemes and designs of infinite wisdom and goodness, to assist us in tracing, discovering, and admiring them; for they shall be *joined to an innumerable company of Angels*, as well as to the *spirits of just men made perfect*, to the *multitude which no man can number*, of the pious, wise, and good of every age and country; continually to improve also in their friendship and conversation; and to be made in a manner infinitely happy in their compleat and everlasting happiness. The natural consequence of all which will be, that their intellectual and moral powers will continually improve and inlarge, and they shall advance continually in knowledge, goodness, friendship, devotion and happiness to eternity. For ^b *they shall die no more, but are equal unto the Angels of God; they enter upon life eternal,*
and

^a *Dan* ix. 21. *Rev.* xxii. 8. *Heb.* xii. 22. *Luke* xvi. 22. ^b *Luke* xx. 36. *Matt.* xxv. 46.

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*and are kings and priests unto God for ever
and ever.*

And further, after all that is here represented, or that the Gospel of Christ has revealed, of the future blessedness and eternal reward of the Saints, ^c *it does not yet clearly and fully appear what they shall be; for eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; in that happy world, where^d violence and war and contentions will no more be heard, where the people are all righteous, and where charity, or universal goodness, never faileth. Where God also and the Redeemer have displayed the riches of their wisdom, power, and love; to prepare mansions of compleat felicity, abodes of happiness, worthy the love of God in the gift of his Son, and worthy the dying love of the Redeemer; and abodes of grandeur and glory, worthy the peculiar residence of the Supream and Infinite Majesty of heaven and of earth; who dwelleth in light to us at present inaccessible and full of glory, whom no mortal hath seen or can see; and to whom, for his infinite love in rewarding our imperfect obedience during this short life, with an advancement to his presence, to the fulness of his favour, and of divine and everlasting blessedness, be glory and power and praise everlasting, Amen. In these, and*
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^c 1 John iii. 2. 1 Cor. ii. 9. ^d If. lx. 18—21.

the like descriptions, is the inestimable and everlasting blessedness and reward of the sincerely pious and good shadowed forth to us, who are incapable at present of receiving the full knowledge of it, in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, *who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light.*

As for the *punishment* which the guilty wretches must suffer, who are condemned by the Son of God, we have the following merciful warnings from Scripture. * *That the wicked shall rise to shame and everlasting contempt; and that God will render indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, to every soul of man that doth evil. That the fearful, or cowardly deserter of religion, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whore-mongers, and adulterers, and drunkards, and idolators, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death. For the King will say to them on his left hand, depart accursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. There will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth, when despairing they shall look up to the happy abodes of the Saints from*
which

* Dan. xii. 2. Rom. ii. 8, 9. Rev. xxi. 8. Gal. v. 19. Matt. xxv. 41. Mark ix. 46. Luke xiii. 28. xvi. 24. Matt. iii. 12. 2 Theff. i. 19. Matt. x. 28.

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which they are cast out, and in vain wish for the least relief, for a drop of water to cool their tongues amidst the flame; for like tares or chaff they shall be consumed with unquenchable fire, suffer in hell the second death, being there punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell. This is the Scripture account of their punishment, than which we cannot conceive any thing more righteous and terrible. For they are for ever banished from a heaven of rational and divine pleasures, which throughout their state of trial they have obstinately despised, and by established vice unfitted themselves to enjoy; and they suffer a punishment for severity [†] exactly proportioned to their guilt, such as the wisdom of God sees necessary, to maintain in the moral world the honour of the divine government, and obedience to his laws; and such as may for ever root out sin and disobedience from the creation of God.

And then the Son of God having fully accomplished the great ends of his Mediation and Kingdom, [‡] shall deliver up the Kingdom to God even the Father, and himself be subject to him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.

And now having set life and death, the blessing and the curse before you, I would

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[†] Luke xii. 48.

[‡] 1 Cor. xv. 24—28.

earnestly desire every Reader, to give to those great things that serious consideration which their infinite importance demands; and as earnestly beg of God, to bless this consideration, and make it effectual to your becoming wise and good now, and happy for ever; by rousing you to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life; living henceforward as they who expect a future Judgment and eternal recompences; never more prevailed on by any views of interest or pleasure, to do any thing which may expose you to the condemnation of hell, but cheerfully and constantly practising whatever will produce the fruits of everlasting peace, life, glory, and felicity. God infinitely good and merciful grant we may all be so wise and happy! *To him who is able to keep us from falling, and present us faultless, before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

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